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## BALKAN BACKGROUND

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# BALKAN BACKGROUND

By  
BERNARD NEWMAN

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*First printing.*

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# 1

## THE BALKANS

### I

IN 1933 I WAS riding a bicycle across Bulgaria. One night I came to a village: there was no inn, but that did not matter—peasant hospitality is without limit. We had a simple meal in the one-roomed cottage, when I noticed a picture on the wall. It was a crude oleograph, but the face it represented was familiar.

Immediately I began to think of the stern Balkan days of sixty years earlier, when Christian Bulgars were fighting desperately for their freedom from the Turkish bondage. Disraeli, pursuing his policy of "bolstering up the Turk" against Russia, not only refused to aid the Christians, but refused to let anybody else aid them. It is good for British reputation that there was a statesman in London who held very different views: otherwise it might not be safe for an Englishman to travel the Balkans today. It was the stern face of Gladstone which gazed down on me from the wall of the primitive Bulgarian cottage. And to this day in the Balkans, where memories are very, very long, when the name of Disraeli is mentioned, people spit upon the ground: but at the name of Gladstone they raise their hats.

In our lifetime, the usual outlook on the Balkans has been patronizing and somewhat contemptuous: here were a lot of twopenny-ha'penny countries which were always making wars. What was more, their wars had a nasty habit of spreading. "The tinder-box of Europe" was the mildest epithet employed. The very name of the peninsula was transformed into a verb, and to "Balkanize" a region meant to divide it into a series of petty warring states, completely unstable, and rife with corruption.

The picture is completely distorted. Every one of the Balkan wars was impelled from without, not within: the Great Powers tended to "adopt" the young states, and to use them as puppets in their machinations of power-politics: if Russia became the protector of Bulgaria, then Austria imposed an alliance on Roumania. Of the wars which have devastated the Balkans during the last century and a half, only two were caused by quarrels between the freed Balkan states. Both these were directly due to foreign intervention—in one case, indeed, a Serbian army under Austrian officers marched against a Bulgarian army directed by Russians!

The instability of Balkan régimes was almost invariably the result of foreign influence, and the corruption was an unfortunate Turkish legacy which the new "protectors" took no trouble to correct.

The Balkans became the battle-ground of Europe inevitably: their geographical position ensured them this dubious honour. The natural direction of German expansionist ideas was along the Danube to the south-cast. Here in the Balkans their line crossed that of Russia, seeking an outlet to the warm sea at the Dardanelles. Centuries earlier, the Balkans were the scene of countless Asiatic raids into Europe, induced by their proximity to the easy route via the Danube valley into the heart of Europe. Later, the tide of war flowed in the opposite direction. The people who were least concerned with the marching armies were the Balkan peasants.

It is high time that we sat up and took real notice of the Balkans. We completely failed to solve their problems in 1919—not for lack of goodwill, but for sheer lack of interest. Then we wondered why German influence became paramount in the region—and why more than half its people are now ranged among our enemies. If we do not take more trouble in 1945 than we did in 1919, then we head for further disasters.

The ignorance of the British today is as disconcerting as the lack of interest. I was lecturing recently to a company of Auxiliary Territorial Service girls. They would have been classed as

girls of at least average intelligence, but seven out of the front-row eleven could make no distinction between Balkan and Baltic: nor were the other four more than superficially informed.

Their grandfathers knew the Balkans better: they followed earnestly and generously the struggles of the subject states for freedom. Since then British sympathy has declined. A Polish friend put it well: "England is the traditional friend of the under-dog. But once the under-dog has got up, then the English are no longer interested." Or maybe the concentration of the educational system on ancient rather than modern history is responsible for the present neglect in Britain. People who can give a detailed if romantic account of the Wars of the Roses will confess their complete ignorance about the Balkan Wars of Liberation—a hundred times more important in their effects, even on Britain. In older days ignorance was perhaps excusable. Education followed classical lines, concentrating interest and sympathy on Greece, regarding the remaining Balkan peoples (as the Greeks did) as mere "barbarians." When in 1878 Prince Charles of Hohenzollern, an able and well educated man, was invited to become king of Roumania, he reached for an atlas to find out where the country was—or if it really existed! (He was a far-sighted man: when he noticed that Roumania lay on the direct line from London to Bombay, he accepted the invitation.)

And, if that earlier generation knew something of the Balkans, it had to thank Gladstone rather than Disraeli. At the Berlin Conference of 1878, which "settled" the future of the Balkans, and, as we shall see, certainly directed it towards the disaster of 1914, Disraeli was completely uninterested in anything but power politics. He refused to receive the representatives of the Balkan peoples—except of Greece: this unfortunate man was allowed to read a report, and Disraeli slept soundly through it all. The French delegate was even worse, confusing Bucarest and Bukhara. Bismarck admitted frankly that he never took the trouble to open the mailbag from Constantinople—"the whole of the Balkans is not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier."

Such limited outlook seems to have been transmitted to many of

the British leaders engrossed in home affairs. Mr. Baldwin declared that our frontiers were on the Rhine, but encouraged no more distant survey. Mr. Neville Chamberlain referred to Czechoslovakia, three hours' flying distance from London, as "that remote land of which we know so little." Even Mr. Lloyd George, whose mind was more agile and better stocked than most, confessed that he had never heard of Teschen—whose debated ownership between Poland and Czechoslovakia led directly to the clash of 1939.

The British are a strange people, far more volatile than they pretend. They follow fashions in political thought as fervently as women follow fashions in dress. When their attention can be attracted from their own intimate affairs, their gaze varies from year to year. For a spell they are Imperialists, developing the vast resources of the Empire: then they are interested in the workings of the American New Deal: next in the economic experiments in Russia. All these are important, but so are the others. Big groupings and chain stores are a feature of modern organization, yet the world would be the poorer without the one-man business. The small Balkan countries may not be as important as the United States or Russia, but it is not merely unfair but very foolish to ignore them.

Victorian ideas are exceedingly persistent. Even today many people visualize the Serb or the Roumanian as a fierce-moustached man, rifle slung behind him, bandolier of cartridges across his chest, a belt of daggers about him, with bombs in his pocket, and revolutionary ideas in his mind. The picture is quite fantastic. The Balkan peasant is a friendly creature, who has been far too patient with his lot. His workaday costume is a shabby and ragged suit of homespuns, but on Sunday he and his wife turn out in homemade artistic creations which put most of our modern fashions to shame: indeed, they also shame his brother who has migrated to the neighbouring town, and who has doffed the traditional costume in favour of a shoddy ten-dollar suit and a straw hat.

In education the Balkans have not yet reached Western Euro-

pean standards, but their people are of high intelligence. When they are given a chance, they show themselves as equal to the best. Their history had led them along paths of violence to freedom. The long Turkish domination had appalling effects. Consider the strides made in England between the Wars of the Roses and the reign of Queen Victoria. For all that time the Balkans stood still.

Allowing for their disadvantages, and the late hour at which they entered the free European scene, the Balkan peoples have made surprising progress, generally because of their own energy, owing little to outside help.

There never was a time when close attention to Balkan affairs was so essential. If, at the moment of victory, we have no plan for the solution of Balkan problems, then we must be prepared for more trouble—which, we can indeed agree, has a habit of spreading. Economically our interest should need no urging. The standard of life in South-eastern Europe is low: the average cash income of the Balkan peasant *family* is \$70 a year. Out of this it must pay taxes! The residue for the purchase of manufactured goods is naturally not very large!

Today, very correctly, we are considering seriously problems of employment after the war. If the standard of living in Eastern Europe could be raised to anything like our own, then for the rest of our generation unemployment would cease to be a grey bogey: instead, all the factory chimneys in Britain and America would be continuously smoking: and in Germany.

## II

This book is modest in its scope. It will represent the minimum of what we ought to know about the Balkans if we are to form an opinion. I shall try to present an unbiased background. This is very essential today, when, because Yugoslavia and Greece are our friends, and Bulgaria, Roumania, and Albania are among our opponents, some emotional people would cheerfully plunge into grave injustices. As we shall see, Bulgaria is on the wrong side

today precisely because the same viewpoint prevailed after previous wars.

I can offer my own impressions of each people and their countries, for I have wandered about them all: casually spending my time in peasant cottages and village inns rather than in official circles. There must be some notes on the economic failures and possibilities of the Balkan states. Above all, we must study their history, at least in outline form. It would well repay a much closer examination, not merely because of its thrills and fascination, but because it is vital to the understanding of the problems of today. It is impossible to discuss political questions with a Serb without the intrusion of the Battle of Kossovo, which the Serbs fought against the Turks in 1389—just as an argument with an Irishman tends to lead back to Oliver Cromwell: this may be very irritating, but we can never appreciate the Irish viewpoint until we understand Cromwell's legacy. So it is in the Balkans.

Probably the fashion for highly coloured political maps has led to some confused thinking about the Balkans: physical maps can be much more enlightening. Mediterranean Europe consists of three large peninsulas. The first two, Spain with Portugal, and Italy, have a remarkable degree of cohesion—they have not been "Balkanized." Why should not the Balkan peoples have shaken down into one people, like the Italians, or at most two, like the Spaniards and Portuguese?

The argument overlooks the fact that the two peninsulas became political entities only after centuries of battle. The physical map supplies the Balkan answer. Spain and Italy are bordered in the north by high ranges of mountains, partially separating them from the continental mainland. The northern edge of the Balkans, on the other hand, consists of the Danubian plain: the mountains are to be found across the centre of the peninsula. Thus the south differs very considerably from the north. It is perhaps not surprising that when Greece was at the height of her glorious civilization distant Britain was a primitive backward land. It is surprising that at the same time the northern Balkan districts, a mere stone's throw from Greece, were just as primitive and backward

as Britain. Greek civilization spread more rapidly by sea than by land—and eventually affected Britain more forcibly than it did the neighbouring land today called Bulgaria. Greece has always



THE BALKANS, 1919-39.

been Mediterranean rather than Balkan, and we shall see that this has had great effects upon her history and ideas. The mountains to the north are the only semblance of a “natural” frontier in the



Balkans; all other political dividing lines are largely artificial. The Balkan peninsula, in short, is a geographical expression rather than a natural political or economic unity.

Any map will serve to show the important historic position of the Balkans, the bridge between Europe and Asia Minor. As there are also great varieties of climate and scene in the peninsula, it is not surprising to find it inhabited by a medley of races. The earliest inhabitants mentioned in history are Thracians and Illyrians, of whom the Albanians are alleged to be the descendants: they are to the Balkans what the Basques are to Western Europe. The modern Greeks, though they claim their classical ancestors, are actually an ethnical medley, with Slav as well as Hellenic blood in their veins; so are the Roumanians, whose language at least is derived from Roman settlers in Dacia: it is probable that their original stock can be traced to the Illyrians whom the Romans conquered. Then, in the sixth century, Serbian tribes began to immigrate from Southern Russia; they were followed by the Bulgars. The older inhabitants of the peninsula were pushed into its corners.

The Bulgarian migration was the last, and the most unusual—for the warlike Bulgars were assimilated by the peaceful Slav Serbs they had conquered. From the seventh to the fourteenth century the racial picture of the Balkans gradually took shape. It was always diffused: the isolated valleys housed little tribes often overlooked for generations. Each race in turn had dreams of empire, and by force spread its dominion over a great part of the Balkan peninsula, as the power of the Byzantine Empire declined.

When the Turks crossed into Europe, then, the ethnic pattern of the Balkans was roughly this: to the north of the Danube lived the Vlachs, or Wallachians, or Rumans, as they were variously called. They occupied the plains of the old Roman province of Dacia, now known as Wallachia and Moldavia, and the mountain valleys of Transylvania.

Between the Adriatic and the western slopes of the Balkan Mountains were the Serbs, born of a mixture of Slav and Illyrian stock. To the east, between the Danube and the Rhodope Moun-

tains, were the Slavonized Bulgars. The Albanians, of ancient Balkan origin, were already crowded into their present mountains, and the southern peninsula was occupied by the Greeks, who were the Christianized descendants of the ancient Hellenes—with a liberal admixture of Slav blood in their northern tribes. The situation was never as simple nor as static as this outline would perhaps suggest. Some Balkan tribes were hopelessly scattered; for example, there was a considerable colony of Vlachs (or Roumanians) in Macedonia, far away from the bulk of their race. Tsintsari, another group of Roumanian origin, are even today to be found in every Balkan country—often as traders, for they have developed a remarkable aptitude for commerce. Further, the confusion of peoples was heightened by the fact that organization was feudal or tribal, and any central authority had but little influence in outlying provinces.

The Turkish invasion in the fourteenth century submerged the entire area of the Balkans, except the tiny mountain state of Montenegro. Now the confusion of races, always unrestrained, was multiplied. Some tribes disappeared entirely. Others, like the Greeks, always retained their racial identity throughout the long years of domination: more remarkable, some races re-emerged after being ethnically "lost" for centuries.

Religion was perhaps the strongest force during the long centuries of submergence. The Balkan people were abandoned by their fellow Christians in Europe, who were much too busy quarrelling among themselves over points of doctrine. The Turks' name for their Christian subjects was *rayah*; the word means "cattle," and no further comment is necessary.

The Turkish administration was simple. The territory conquered was divided into *pashalaks*, each with a Turkish *pasha* as governor. His duty was to keep order and to gather in the taxes. The methods employed were always severe and often brutal.

As if to redouble the mixture of blood in Balkan veins, good-looking girls of the *rayah* were rounded up for use in Turkish *harems*. Even more abominable (in a region where a boy is counted as more valuable than two girls) was the method of

recruitment of the crack corps known as the *Janissaries*. At intervals of four years, the finest Christian boys of ages ranging from six to ten years were taken by force from their parents. They were "converted" to Islam, forgot their old homes, and became Turkish soldiers—and fathers. Quite apart from the mental cruelty involved in the taking of the children, the resultant ethnic confusion can be imagined. A Bulgar boy is commandeered from his family, and becomes a Janissary. Later in life he marries a Bulgar girl—but he is now a Turk, and his descendants today are classed as Turks.

Yet probably the bitterest Turkish legacy in the Balkans was not that of cruelty or confusion, but that of corruption. It was inculcated into Balkan life for five hundred years, and it will not be eradicated in a day. The pasha had to pay over to the Sultan a fixed annual sum as taxes for his province. Anything he could raise above this sum was his own. In turn he "farmed out" services to his subordinates: every man had his price.

The nineteenth century was one long struggle for freedom: the liberal ideas of the French Revolution penetrated the most backward Balkan valleys. Now, at long last, help was available from Christian Europe—not because of sympathy for suffering Christians (though this was loudly proclaimed as the impelling cause) but for national advantage. Austria and Russia both coveted the Balkans, and encouraged revolt so as to weaken the Turkish power—always intending to use the liberated states as their own puppets. Nor was Britain guiltless in the play of power politics. Statesmen looked askance at the prospect of Russia's dominating the Near East, and threatening the route to India; and the British evolved the policy called "propping up Turkey"—and incidentally holding down the Christian "cattle." This was the primary purpose of the Crimean War.

But ideas of freedom, once roused, can never be suppressed. By the date of the First World War, the Turks had been driven from the Balkans except for the bridgehead about Constantinople. The intervening centuries had mongrelized the Balkan tribes to such an extent that thousands of men did not know to which race they

belonged. Today you may meet a man who calls himself a Serb, but his grandparents may have been Greeks and Albanians: or it may be the other way round.

This idea may be confusing to Englishmen and Americans, secure in their own racial consciousness. Yet it only represents the beginning of the Balkan medley. Many of the high valleys were until recent years almost cut off from their neighbours, and tribal patterns still linger. In the course of a day's walk you may meet men who will call themselves Pomaks, Cumans, Gagauz, Bunyevaks and Safardis.<sup>1</sup> You will point out that according to the map they are all supposed to be Greeks or Bulgars. They will agree that maps are very clever things, but that nevertheless their fathers—who ought to know—told them that they were Pomaks, Cumans, Gagauz, Bunyevaks, and Safardis. It was at this point that the average Britisher used to abandon in despair any attempt to unravel the Balkan tangle.

The Balkans are not alone in their ethnic medley, of course: it is common in Eastern Europe. Once I wandered in Western Ukraine, the area disputed between Poland and Russia. I would ask a man if he were Polish or Ukrainian; he would reply, "I am from here." That was all he knew: he belonged to his village, and acknowledged no wider political ties.

The common method of determining a man's race in this confused area is by his religion. If he is Roman Catholic, then he is a Pole: if he is Uniat,<sup>2</sup> he is a Ukrainian. The method is ethnically unsound. It does not show what a man is, but what he thinks he is—and where he thinks his loyalties lie.

It is applied in the Balkans also, but here ideas are more vehement. The Serb whose grandparents were Greeks will protest the loudest that he is a Serb. We shall see that Serbs and Bulgars are very closely related, but when the town of Pirot was ceded to Serbia in 1878, the majority of its people were so determinedly

<sup>1</sup> Pomaks are Moslemized Bulgars, the Cumans belong to a Turkish tribe, Gagauz are Christianized Turks, Bunyevaks are Roman Catholic Serbs, and Safardis are Jews of Spanish origin.

<sup>2</sup> Uniates accept the authority of the Pope at Rome, but follow the rites of the Orthodox Church.

Bulgar that they moved over the frontier rather than live under Serbian rule: there they founded the town of Tsaribrod. It is typical of the detailed problems we have to consider that Tsaribrod itself was forcibly transferred to the Serbs in 1919!

It is not enough to dismiss a man's own ethnic ideas. He may be of mongrel origin, but if he is prepared to suffer and maybe to die for the privilege of calling himself a Bulgar, then at least his claim deserves consideration. Indeed, I see no alternative in the Balkan medley. Some families would revert to previous racial ties in a couple of generations: others, never. Blood may be thicker than water, but the mind and thoughts of a man can dominate even his blood. Some of the most fervent patriots in history have been of alien stock. Pilsudski was a Lithuanian, not a Pole: Bismarck came of a family of Germanized Slavs.

I should emphasize again the force of religion in this ethnic tangle. There was one case where thousands of Bulgars were given the option of returning to Bulgaria from Greece—under conditions of amicable arrangements, not of force. They refused, because of their religious attachment—not to another creed, but to the local branch of the Orthodox Church. Through the centuries of Turkish oppression it was the Church which did most to sustain racial consciousness and culture: it is not surprising that its influence is still strong.

We shall have to discourage our Balkan friends in their plunges into over-ancient history. We shall see successive empires controlling the whole peninsula. Many towns and districts have strong cultural, sentimental, and historic interests alike for Greeks, Bulgars, Serbs, and Albanians. Our guide should surely be the welfare of the people who live there today, or are likely to live there tomorrow. Yet there will be no permanent content in the Balkans while national injustices are blatant. In Britain and the United States nationalism has passed its peak: in the Balkans, where it was for so long suppressed, it has scarcely reached its full strength even today. Our study of ancient history need not be prolonged, but we ought to glance more carefully at the record of the last hundred years, when the submerged states emerged precariously

and by hazard from their long servitude. It was then that most of the problems of today were born.

## III

Even at this stage a brief outline of the Balkan resurgence is advisable: in later chapters it can be developed in detail which ought not to pall, for it is as thrilling a story as the world can show. An occasional piece of repetition may be inevitable.

The Greeks were the first to recover their independence, as they had been most successful in maintaining their racial solidarity. Ever since the unsuccessful attack on Vienna in 1683, Turkish power in the Balkans had gradually declined. Central authority was loose—and a number of local princes were Greeks, for their business acumen advanced them high in Turkish administrative circles—and thereby achieved unpopularity in other parts of the Balkans, where they were often regarded as Turkish agents.

By 1829 Southern Greece was an independent state: a year later a principality called Serbia was created farther north, still owing allegiance to the Turks. Bulgarian freedom was delayed until 1878, an important year in Balkan history. The Russians, having beaten the Turks in battle, made with them the Treaty of San Stefano. This created a considerable Bulgarian state, including the whole of Macedonia. Other European powers—Britain and Austria in particular—objected: the Russian advance into the Balkans must be halted—for the Tsars planned to use Bulgaria as a satellite state. The Treaty of San Stefano was torn up and that of Berlin substituted. In this the territory of Bulgaria was drastically curtailed. The territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire was proclaimed as the cornerstone of European peace. Nevertheless, while restoring to Turkey the greater part of her Balkan possessions, Britain relieved her of Cyprus, France seized Tunis, and Austria marched into Bosnia-Herzegovina. We shall have to look seriously at the treaties of San Stefano and Berlin. The events of 1878 lead directly to those of 1914, and thence to those of 1939.

Roumania, too, had secured her independence, but millions of the other Balkan races remained under Turkish rule. In 1912, Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia united to drive the Turks out of Europe: they very nearly succeeded, but in the hour of victory quarrelled among themselves. Bulgaria turned on her allies, and was beaten to the ground.

Many of the Balkan states were little more than puppets in the fingers of "protecting" powers. Russia and Austria had clashing ambitions in the Balkans, and frequently changed their protégés to attain them. In 1878 Austria had occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina "temporarily." The pretext was to restore law and order: the actual intent to obstruct the expansion of Serbia—for the two provinces were inhabited by Serbs and kindred tribes. In 1908 the annexation was made permanent: that is the usual intention behind "temporary" occupations: or, if not their intent, their result.

But national consciousness in the Balkans was thoroughly roused. Serbs fumed at the thought of millions of their brothers under alien rule—and at the knowledge that Austria planned to submerge Serbia itself. In 1914 a Bosnian Serb assassinated the heir to the Austrian throne. Here was a fine and "moral" pretext to secure Austrian ambitions in Serbia: the Austrian government could not resist it, attacked Serbia, and plunged the world into war.

The Serbs fought gallantly throughout. The Roumanians entered the war on the side of the Allies, but were soon defeated. The Greeks were torn by internal dissension: most of the people were for the Allies, but the king was opposed. Most important of all, Bulgaria was still smarting under her sense of injury, and joined the Central Powers. We shall see the tremendous consequences of this step.

Such is a rapid sketch of the Balkan story. We must pursue it in greater detail country by country: while concerned primarily with the present and future, we shall never be able to forget the past.

## IV

We shall discover that most Balkan problems centre about the same feature—minorities. There is no perfect land frontier in Europe—on every boundary tribes have met and intermixed. The ethnic clashes in the Balkans were more violent than most others and every race is of very mixed blood. The long years of Turkish domination had wide effects: to the Turks, the Christian rayah of all races were alike, to be planted where their labour was most required. Thus, when the Christian states emerged, their populations were hopelessly mixed: no frontier satisfactory to all parties could ever be devised, and a fair share of the last fifty years has been devoted to internal Balkan frontier squabbles.

I have discussed European frontiers at some length in my book *The New Europe*; it is clear that in minority questions we have one of the fiercest provokers of conflict: therefore we must tackle the difficulty very seriously. The solution I advanced came from the Balkans.

For a hundred years Greece and Turkey glared at each other across the Aegean, and half a dozen times they were locked in combat. In the World War the Greeks were on the winning side, and as their principal share of the spoils were awarded a huge area in Asia Minor. The contention was that Smyrna was a Greek city, and that its natural hinterland—containing large numbers of Greeks—must go with it.

But the broken Turkish power revived miraculously, and the Greek army in Asia Minor was hopelessly defeated. Tempers were primitive. Smyrna a Greek city? Very well, argued the Turks—burn it down, then it was no longer a Greek city. A million Greeks in Asia Minor? Very well—bundle them back to Greece: then there could be no question of a Greek claim.

There was no discussion. The ancestors of the Greeks of Asia Minor had lived there for dozens of generations, but they were ruthlessly uprooted and shipped to Greece. The Greeks naturally



retaliated, and all Turks in Greek territory were immediately turned out of Greece. This did not solve the problem of making room for the Asia Minor refugees, for there were only 200,000 Turks in Greece. But Greece housed many thousands of Roumanians. These—more politely—were returned to Roumania. The Roumanian government, to make room for them, evicted thousands of Bulgars.

I saw something of the terrible scenes of those days—thousands of weeping, starving refugees, arriving in an unprepared land, suffering incredible hardships, decimated by disease. I never thought that I could even do so much as to suggest consideration of such a method. But the point is this: the Greeks and Turks, enemies for hundreds of years, are now friends and allies.

I do not see any practical alternative to this method. If tolerance and confidence were features of European life, then minority questions would never be dangerous. Unhappily, these admirable qualities are sadly lacking. There will be no permanent peace in the Balkans until its racial squabbles are resolved: to accomplish this we shall have to take drastic steps.

It is simpler in the Balkans than in Western Europe—usually a question of moving a peasant from one farm to another. And, naturally, the task will not be forced upon us abruptly as in 1922: transfers of population can be effected under friendly and prepared conditions of peace. There is nothing very new or novel in the process.

There need be no compulsion. In some areas, as we shall see, a man's outlook or religion is of more importance to him than his race. An Albanian in Greece will be given a generous opportunity to move into Albania: if he so chooses, he can remain in Greece—as a Greek. The inconvenience of the few cannot be allowed to prejudice the safety of the many.

In some cases, however, our problem is less simple, so great is the racial confusion. Nevertheless, we have to tackle it firmly: we have at least a good general guide, in the terms of the Atlantic Charter.

## V

Mountains dominate the Balkan scene, disrupting communications and lowering the standard of life. Their influence is to some extent counterbalanced by another and more beneficent physical feature: a river—the Danube. Balkan problems can never be divorced from those of the Danube valley, and any solution must apply to both.

To British and American people the Danube is a blue stream of romance, suggesting Vienna and waltzes. To Balkan people the Danube is a muddy river of merchandise, suggesting tugs with strings of barges. Nearly a quarter of Balkan trade is carried along the Danube. Railways, roads, and oil-pipe lines all turn towards it: its tributary rivers are pressed into service, carrying the huge grain barges and enormous rafts of timber. In a peak year, over two million tons of merchandise passed through the Iron Gates, the key to the river's course.

Here the powerful river bursts free through the mountains—the southern sweep of the Carpathians. In Germany it is already a sizable stream, pressed into service, linked with the Rhine by a remarkable canal which crosses a range of mountains. Its Austrian course is more picturesque, but its fiery reaches have been tamed, and 650-ton barges now ply from Regensburg (Ratisbon) to the Black Sea. In the lower reaches of the river, below the Iron Gates, huge barges of 1,000 tons carry their cargoes to be transferred to ocean-going ships at the ports—which may actually be hundreds of miles up-river. The main cargoes upstream are wheat and corn from all the north Balkan countries, bauxite from Yugoslavia, and oil from Roumania. Downstream are carried manufactured goods and coal, mainly from Germany. Cereals and oil again are the principal subjects of local trade below the Iron Gates.

In Hungary the Danube threads its way sedately across the great plain, breaking haphazardly into half a dozen wide channels, driving thousands of water-mills built on river barges. The infrequent villages lie well back from the river, for its floods can

bring disaster. By the time it crosses Northern Yugoslavia the Danube is a noble stream, half a mile wide. Then it gathers its strength to force a way through the obstructing mountains. At the Kazan Gorge—one of the scenic masterpieces of Europe—it is no more than eighty yards wide, enclosed within cliffs topping 2,000 feet: it falls rapidly, in six lengthy shelves—the difficulty of its passage is illustrated by the sudden variation in its depth. I bathed in the rapidly flowing waters, and touched bottom: floating down with pleasant ease, I tried to find ground again: I could not—and the local girl who swam beside me told me that the river here attained a depth of 250 feet!

Here, too, I noted a striking sign of the Danube's long commercial history. On the left bank (the Roumanian side) a modern road had been hacked from the cliffs: on the right bank (in Yugoslavia) were the remains of a road built by the Roman Emperor Trajan eighteen hundred years earlier!

The gorge ends as suddenly as it begins: the mountains slope back more gently from the water's edge. The river rushes onwards, eager to burst clear from the restrictive hills. Ahead lie dark flecks above the water's surface—the rocks of the Iron Gates.

Here is no picturesque canyon, but Wild West rapids. Gaunt rocks obstruct the shallow, foaming stream, which is not free from obstructions for ten consecutive yards. The flood waters of spring cover the rocks, and make navigation possible. For the rest of the year the Iron Gates formed a deadly barrier to trade: barges were unloaded and their contents wearily transferred to others at the far end of the rapids, which swirl onwards at more than twelve miles an hour. Then, in 1896, engineers tackled the problem. A channel was blasted out through the shelves of the Kazan Gorge: I noticed the floating logs used as buoys to mark its course: and that the steering wheels of the river steamers were in triplicate—three strong men were needed to keep the boat to a safe passage.

By the side of the Iron Gates, a canal was constructed on the right bank, with a little railway alongside, so that an engine can

give a pull to the upstream barges. The canal is only two miles long, but here is an idea of the force of the turbulent stream: a boat will float down the canal in twenty minutes, but two hours may be needed to tow it up.

At the Iron Gates man triumphed over Nature, but no ingenuity has conquered the restrictions of ice. The lower Danube begins to freeze in December, and may remain a rough sea of ice until March. Then, necessarily, all traffic is halted. Even in Hungary the two coldest winter months usually see a frozen Danube.

Below the Iron Gates, the Danube becomes sedate again. On the right bank, the wooded hills of Yugoslavia are replaced by Bulgarian plains, dotted with villages where the Moslem minaret stands beside the Christian steeple. Opposite lie the great wheat-fields of Old Roumania. For its last stage the river lies entirely within Roumanian territory, with great ports far upstream—for in places the Danube attains a width of three miles. Finally it dissolves into its delta, a vast area formed over countless centuries by the river's deposits of mud. Dozens of streams straggle towards the Black Sea: three are navigable, others no more than slow-moving marshes. Here is a primitive wilderness of green and water: hundreds of square miles of swamps, inhabited only by pelicans, swans, ducks, and herons. Little islands stand a few inches out of the water, their trees casting graceful reflections. There are floating islands, too: decayed vegetation forms masses of peatlike substance; to this cling exotic plants, whose short life is very gay. There is no sound, save for the occasional call of a bird. But only a mile away an ocean-going ship will be chugging down the deep channel: and fishermen in little boats will be harrying the sturgeon, the king-fish of European waters.

The Danube is the most important river in Europe. It is one of the great historic international highways. It carried merchandise from Asia to Europe, and now reverses the process. Along its valley passed the invading tribes swarming from the east: in later days European armies marched back towards the lands of their forebears. It has seen more blood and battles than any comparable area in the world.

The Danube flows through seven countries, and is of service to a dozen more. In its history it has seen every known form of European civilization flourish along its banks: even now its valley houses many religions—and a greater confusion of political creeds. Still more bewildering is its medley of peoples, scattered haphazard by history along the great valley. Their ancestors were attracted by its green and fertile fields and hoped to find peace. They never did: other invaders pressed after them: the Danube has never known any substantial period of quiet. The problems of yesterday prompted those of today.

Because I have a first-hand acquaintance, I shall spend most of my time considering the vexed territorial arguments which still grievously disturb the nationalistic states of the Balkans. Nevertheless, I need no persuasion that economic problems are equally important. Nor are they simple. I saw a Danube steamer coaling at Vienna by modern methods—a giant steel grip moved by a crane, operated by one man. In Yugoslavia I saw the process of coaling, but now twenty men wearily carried heavy sacks of coal across a narrow plank.

The answer appears obvious, but is not. I discussed it with a Magyar landowner, who farmed a huge area of the Hungarian plain. "Yes, I agree with you," he said. "Here we see twelve men ploughing, each behind a yoke of oxen. If I bought a tractor, one man could do the work of twelve. But what is to happen to the other eleven?"

In Roumania, as we shall see, the rich land yields comparatively poor crops, so antiquated are the agricultural methods employed. The inevitable answer is—tractors, fertilizers, and the like. Undoubtedly these would greatly increase the peasant's crops. But his real problem is the disposal of his produce, not the growing of more. Already his barns are bulging with grain he cannot sell. He does not talk of fertilizers, but of markets. That is to say, the answer to the Balkan economic riddle does not lie inside the Balkans. We pictured King Carol or General Antonescu as the dictator of the Roumanian peasant. His real dictators were the grain brokers of Liverpool, Winnipeg, and Chicago.

Often, to our sophisticated eyes, a solution to a Balkan problem may appear as obvious and simple—until we remember that we are dealing with unsophisticated and conservative peasants. We shall note, for example, that the Balkan farms are very small, and are often split up into fragments. A Bulgarian peasant's lot of ten acres may be atomized into a dozen tiny fields, often miles apart: thus he spends an undue portion of his working day walking to and from his fields. A paternal Bulgarian government adopted the obvious solution—co-massation. By exchange and transfer with his neighbours, a peasant's fields should be gathered together in one area. But the peasant protested very forcibly. Hail is one of his greatest enemies. He may gaze with pride on a fine field of maize: twenty minutes later it may be flattened to the ground. So, he argued, if his fields are well scattered, one may be smitten, but the others may escape: if he owns one large field, he may be ruined in an afternoon. Thus the Bulgarian government, proceeding with the "obvious solution," had to institute a special hail insurance before the peasant could be persuaded to take action towards co-massation. We shall find that a lot of hail insurances will be necessary before we can even approach many of the Balkan problems.

The Balkan lands are not happy. With their history, it is amazing that their people are as cheerful and as virile as they are. Today they are sorely smitten, but they will recover—to the Balkan peoples, subjection is a periodic episode in their history. "The Blue Danube," if its tempo be lowered, can serve as a funeral dirge, but one day it will recover its ancient spirit.

## VI

If Western statesmen were not especially interested in the Balkans, financiers were. Undeveloped countries are an excellent field for speculation.

Now it is quite customary in these days to condemn the financial magnate, who has few friends. Indeed, as I shall proceed to argue, his Balkan intervention has not been happy, yet his deal-

ings were mostly legal and even honourable by international standards. Their effects were almost invariably unfortunate.

A Balkan government discovered that its country contained rich deposits of zinc, shall we say. Considerable sums would be necessary to exploit the metal, so a foreign financial group was approached. (Or, more usually, a foreign company would discover the zinc and approach the government.) In the subsequent agreement, the government would sell to the financiers the right to operate zinc mines in a certain area for several million dollars. This sum would be paid over in cash, and the greater part would go to the budget account: a reasonable percentage might be diverted into the pockets of the members of the government.

Then the financial company would begin its costly operations. Years might elapse before any quantity of zinc could be produced. In the meantime, they were giving employment to thousands of Balkanites who might otherwise be crowding out a peasant livelihood. True, the wages paid were not high, but the company paid what was customary locally. Was it their business to pay more? If they had done so, all other wages in the country would have risen, too: so would prices: the industrial workers *might* gain, but the peasants would certainly lose—for they have no wages to rise. Thus the government would have argued, agreeing with the financiers.

Now the operating company knows something of the Balkans. Mining is a risky business anywhere: in the Balkans, doubly so. There is a risk that you will not find any zinc: a second that the government will take it all from you when you have found it. Thus, whereas the same company in Britain would be satisfied with a return of 6 or 7 per cent, in the Balkans it thinks in terms of 30 or 40 per cent, to compensate for the risks, admittedly much higher.

In the preliminary stages, everybody is grateful—the financiers are benefactors. Let us assume that everything goes well, and that zinc begins to be produced in quantities. The government, as usual, is in financial difficulties. Here is a foreign company making big money out of our zinc. True, they have an agreement, but

that was made by the last government but two—we can tear it up. Let us put on a special tax, on foreign investments only.

At the same time the workpeople are getting concerned. They are intelligent men, and know that the zinc they produce commands money—why should they not have a larger share of it?

So the company, which invested its money in order to make a profit—and this, we must admit, is not yet classed as a crime—finds that it is getting none. The workers it could deal with—the government would back it in any repressive measures, if necessary. The occasion should not arise, for the demands of the workers are comparatively small, and can be satisfied economically. But the demands of the government are large, and continuous.

Now there is some honour among financiers, and an excellent intelligence service. Thus, when the impecunious government decides to develop its copper deposits, it finds itself facing very severe terms. For many years progress is retarded or completely halted because of the lack of confidence. Then along comes a man like Hitler. He is quite willing to advance huge sums: he does not care about profits: all he wants is power—which seems to cost nothing, and in any case is not perceived at the time. But other foreign governments do perceive it, and get nervous: they enter into competition, offering cheap loans. A country which ten years earlier could not raise a dollar's credit now finds itself flooded with millions. Of course, when Hitler has been removed, then the old position will recur.

This is precisely what we have to avoid. We shall discuss later the financial requirements of the Balkans, which are considerable. It is already obvious that for some years the Balkans will not require loans, but gifts. Financial companies are not interested in gifts, and the problem will have to be transferred to other shoulders. It will demand no little generosity.

## VII

German influence in the Balkans prior to 1939 was due partly to our own neglect, partly to her favourable geographical posi-



tion, partly to economic domination, and largely to fear. For our neglect we have only ourselves to blame: many Britishers were far more concerned with means tests and income tax than with Balkan problems: far more were concerned with the highly delicate complications of football pools. The second consideration attached blame to no one. One glance at a map shows that it is only natural that German trade should flow to the south-east: the Danube is one of the world's greatest highways of trade: "the dustless road," gypsies call it.

Economic domination was quite another thing. The Balkan countries were very hard hit by the world economic crisis, and Germany kindly came to their rescue by taking all their surplus products. True, payment was to be made in manufactured goods, but that was much better than nothing at all. True, also, that German deliveries lagged—she was so busily engaged on her new armaments programme that her civilian manufacturers fell in arrear: soon Germany was in debt to every Balkan country—which only made them the more dependent on her success, for they could ill afford to lose their accumulated balances. Even considered only from the economic point of view, the German stranglehold on Balkan trade became so complete that the local countries were scarcely in a position to haggle about terms.

Yet fear was always the dominating argument. It was customary to speak of the army in most Balkan countries as being "pro-German," but the term was not quite correct. Professional officers appreciated and respected the tremendous power of the German army: they knew quite well that their own could never stand up to it, for in modern battle Balkan heroism cannot be substituted for guns and armour: so their admiration turned to fear. This was common all over Continental Europe. Only in Greece, where naval power was also esteemed at its true value, was the thought of British aid a real factor in the situation.

The Balkans have never been free from fear. Had their people been less courageous, the continuing oppressive atmosphere must have dulled their spirit long ago. They suffered under the Turks.

When at long last they regained their freedom, they found that they were threatened by Austria and Russia. This dispelled, they found themselves in fear of Germany, a fear destined to be very real. They are patient: they have been oppressed for so long that a few additional years have little meaning. When they have dissolved the German terror, whence comes the next? Already some Balkan eyes turn anxiously in the direction of Russia: it should be possible to dissolve that apprehension. The British and Americans at least hold one advantage: the Balkan peoples have no especial occasion to love us, but they do not fear us: they have never had cause.



CONFLICTING INTERESTS IN THE BALKANS AT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR.

## VIII

The Balkan lands are peasant countries. Of their sixty million people, 74 per cent live on the land—the British figure is 5 per cent: millions more live by the land, marketing its produce and supplying the needs of the cultivators. Little more than 10 per cent of the Balkan people gain their living from industry—and industry in the Balkans includes the village blacksmith or cobbler. If you took away the peasants, there would be left of the Balkans nothing but waste lands relieved by a very occasional metal mine or oil well.

No European country has yet succeeded in solving the problem of the peasant. Often he forms by far the largest part of the population, but his interests are almost always subordinated to those of the industrial worker. In the Balkans his natural standard of living has been pitifully low. I have said that the average cash income of a Balkan family was \$70 a year—for the entire family! Worked out in terms of purchasing power approximating to American standards, each occupied person in the Balkans, in the decade 1925-34, received in cash *or in kind* only \$245 per year. And the occupied person usually had a wife and many children. Per head of the population, the average income from all sources was only \$80 per annum.

The tragedy of the Balkan peasant was that his standard of living was falling instead of rising. Very interesting calculations have been made in "international units," scientifically based upon local purchasing power—for, of course, the number of coins or pieces of paper which a man receives for his work may have no comparative meaning. It is not remarkable to find that the highest material standard of living—which is the feature of life which international units attempt to measure—is reached in the United States, with an annual income of 1,381 points per head. Canada follows with 1,337. The British figure is 1,069. The Scandinavian standards are also high, while France and Germany are 686 and 646 respectively. (All these figures are for 1925-34.)

But the Bulgarian figure is only 259—while in 1911-13 it was as high as 479. In the same period the Russian index rose from 250 to 320, and it has since risen further. The Roumanian standard also declined from 298 to 243. That of Yugoslavia rose from 271 to 330, because of a considerable measure of industrialization—a factor we shall have to consider later. Thus the average standard of living in the Balkans was just about one-fifth of that in the United States! Of all the countries of Europe, only Albania and Lithuania ranked below Bulgaria and Roumania. When I point out that an unemployed man in the United States or Britain is considerably better off than a fully employed Balkan peasant, this is not an argument for lowering our standards; but for raising those in the Balkans.

Assuredly here is a vital and challenging problem. To make it worse, I should emphasize that the figures quoted are for populations as a whole, and the Balkan peasant income is only about two-thirds of that of the local industrial worker. It is quite true that the Balkan peoples have made ample contributions to their own distress.

Some conservatively minded critics place a large share of the blame on the "Balkanization" of the Danube valley by breaking up the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is correct that this divided one large economic unit into a number of constituent states which, because of national jealousies, did very little mutual trade. Yet, in spite of that, the international index figures of Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia actually rose. Economic unity in the Balkans would have been a boon, but it would not have solved the problem.

The inescapable fact is that the Balkans, doomed by history to house peasant peoples, are not naturally agricultural lands. Roumania, with its vast Danubian plains, has 46 per cent of arable land: Greece has only 15½ per cent—no less than 55 per cent is waste ground. Bulgaria and Yugoslavia have 38 per cent and 29 per cent of arable land respectively. In each country there are very considerable areas of pasture land and forests, but one-third

of the Balkan area consists of waste land. Moreover, most of the cultivable soil is of poor quality and yields only half the average British crops.

The Balkan peasant is stricken with that most terrible of diseases, frustration. When he won his freedom and his plot of land, he was happy: then he found it just as difficult to win a livelihood. He criticized his politicians bitterly: he had expected oppression from the Turkish despots, but not from his own people. He was not quite fair. Not that I hold any brief for Balkan politicians—on the contrary. Elections were held: different parties won—but the peasant always lost. But even when the peasants were able to adopt the weapon which makes their industrial brothers powerful, that of unity, they were still frustrated. Peasants became Prime Ministers, burning to aid their friends, but always failing, for the reason we have already noted—that the solution of many of the problems lay outside the Balkans, and beyond peasant control. The crux of the economic difficulty lies in the fact that the barren Balkans are being forced to support an agricultural population far beyond their economic capacity.

In the last chapter we must return to these questions again, having first made the acquaintance of the peasant in his own home. He is well worth knowing: a fine, virile character, in spite of his limited outlook: an intelligent man of great potential, with a high moral sense to compensate his faults: of great courage and capacity for suffering, yet lacking that resource which wins battles. His very love for his land and craft can be his undoing. Hundreds of years ago a German prince tried to crush his peasants by force. He failed: they faced him boldly, fought his soldiers, and were not afraid when their brothers died. Then the prince abandoned his policy of open battle, and began to burn the villages: within a few weeks the courageous peasants had surrendered. Hitler followed the same pattern in his Polish and Russian campaigns.

The peasant has always been his own worst enemy. He comprises two-thirds of the entire human race. Combined and organ-

ized, he could dominate the world. Instead, he is divided and exploited. Industrial workers may strike, but the world suffers only inconvenience: if the peasants struck, the world would starve.

Yet the economic distresses of the Balkan peasant are only part of our study, and are interwoven with the economic problems of the world. More pertinent, immediately if not ultimately, is our outline of the political problems of the Balkans, particularly those of national frontiers. We shall have to face these very soon—if we are not careful, before we are ready. The Bulgarian peasant may be poor, but he is fiercely a Bulgar. He is unhappy because of the poor prices he gets for his crops—but he burns with passion when he thinks of the wrongs his country has suffered, and will fight and die to right them. Nationalism may have passed its peak in Britain, but it is still a vital force in Eastern Europe, where peoples recovered their freedom so recently. They are determined at all costs to maintain it.

Thus we must study the basis of their nationalism as well as of their economies: and, since Balkan unity is not merely desirable but vital, we must examine the political difficulties which have for so long retarded it. Our task will require immense patience. Every Balkan problem appears difficult: and yet no Balkan problem is as simple as it appears.

## IX

One aspect of our outlook is very important. If we are to regard all the United Nations as little angels and all the Axis satellites as little devils, then no Balkan settlement is likely to last for long. Those Balkan countries numbered among our enemies find themselves there owing to circumstances over which we had as much control as they had. Balkan unity is a very desirable objective: it will never be attained on a basis of passion and revenge: it is going to be difficult enough even in an atmosphere of goodwill and confidence.

It may seem to the casual reader that I have devoted an undue

proportion of the book to the events of yesterday: the man who knows the Balkans will not share that opinion. Some of the events of today are of such trivial importance that they may be out of date and forgotten by the time this book appears—for history is being written very rapidly, and the time-lag in book production today is considerable. Events which form the headlines this week will in retrospect appear as casual trifles, the vapourings of puppets, the scheming of ambitious men, or desperate attempts to retrieve hopeless situations. In war-time the masses of the people are almost inarticulate. This is especially true in the Balkans, which have scarcely yet experienced democratic rule. We must try to get to the fundamentals of each problem. If our Balkan judgments are to be based only on what is happening today, they are almost certain to be wrong.

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## 2

### BULGARIA

#### I

IT HAS BEEN CLAIMED that the Bulgar is the gentleman of the Balkans. When he stabs you, he does it in the front, not in the back.

He has weathered the stormiest days in the savage Balkan record. This in itself is a proof of his toughness. His country was the first to be enslaved by the Turks, the last to be freed. As was inevitable, Bulgaria's geographical position violently affected the history of the land. Had Bulgarian leaders of today and yesterday studied the science grandiloquently called "geopolitics," they would have realized that the prosperity and even the existence of their country depended very largely upon amicable liaison with their immediate neighbours. This is precisely the one lesson which they omitted or declined to learn: or, maybe, were not allowed to learn.

This is strange, for the Bulgar is certainly the realist of all the Balkan races. Greeks tend to dwell on the unparalleled glories of the past, Roumanians on their legacies of Roman blood and language, Serbs on their ancient military prowess. In each of these countries are innumerable monuments as a reminder of past cultural heights: in Bulgaria there are few. The Bulgar has always been more interested in what is happening today than in what happened yesterday. He would have been much happier had he concentrated his thoughts on what was likely to happen tomorrow: then he would have been more careful about what he did today. But this, after all, is true of all of us.

In 1914 and 1939 alike Bulgaria was the disturbing element in



Balkan solidarity: we shall study the causes and note that the consequences were vast. So far as can be foreseen, the situation is not likely to differ greatly when the present war is won: Bulgaria will still be the problem-child of the Balkan family. It is true that some of her misdoings were the errors of hasty, youthful judgment rather than of sheer wickedness: it is equally true that her experiences at the hands of others have not always been happy—if she was not more sinned against than sinning, at least both conditions were present in ample proportions. It is certain that there can never be real and permanent peace in the Balkans until the problem of Bulgaria is solved: for that, it must first be understood.

## II

My first recollection of Bulgaria is of the fierce dogs employed by the shepherds to guard the mountain flocks. They have to be fierce, for the wolves in winter are keen and unprincipled hunters. And the days of human marauders are not far distant, so suspicion is bred in the canine blood. There is a theory that when Balkan dogs attack you it is useless to fight or to run away: instead, you should sit down quietly, and they will not harm you. Only once did I raise sufficient will-power to sit down: then, I must confess, the rustic advice justified itself.

My second impression was in lighter vein. I attended a village dance: a crowd of hundreds of peasants circled the *horó*, a folk dance, in a mountain valley. Would I like to join them? they asked; their friendship was unforced—few, if any, had ever seen an Englishman before. They gave me a charming and intelligent girl to act as my dancing partner. But soon my host, the village schoolmaster, came rushing up to me.

“You’ve danced with that girl three consecutive times!”

“Well, of course—I don’t know anybody else.”

“By local tradition, if you dance with a girl three consecutive times, it is equivalent to a proposal of marriage!”

I was saved from an awkward situation by a local youth, who also danced three consecutive times with the girl. I sent them a wedding present with unusual pleasure!

My third impression is economic. Life in rural Bulgaria is not expensive: in a village inn I would get dinner, bed, and breakfast for forty cents. But one evening I arrived in a considerable town. There I had a seven-course meal: it included steak and mushrooms; the bill came to eighteen cents—and the waiter had never heard of tips. Yet next day I bought a five-cent bar of chocolate, and had to pay another eighteen cents for it. The chocolate was imported, and heavily taxed, the food home-grown. Hence the difference in values.

The scenic attractions of Bulgaria do not rank especially high. Across the north of the country runs the Balkan range of mountains, topping 6,000 feet: farther south, north of the Greek frontier, are the Rhodope and Rilo groups, half as high again. In between are high valleys and narrow plains. Some geologists believe that many of the Bulgarian valleys are the beds of ancient lakes; this may explain their fertility.

Bulgaria is essentially an agricultural country, about the size of England; 82 per cent of the population work on the land, and another 10 per cent are directly concerned in the marketing or use of its products. The few industries are mainly based on agricultural requirements and have been carried on in the same places for hundreds of years: leather work at Shumba, cutlery at Gabrovo, and so on. The Bulgar has a well-deserved reputation as one of the best workers in the world, but he does not take kindly to factory life. When, to relieve unemployment during a distressing slump period, a Bulgarian government invited foreign firms to establish factories in Bulgaria, the experiment was not a great success. Even the Bulgars who took factory jobs wanted to go home for the harvest: eventually the industrialists had to import labour from neighbouring countries!

The isolated villages are amazingly self-supporting: life is simple but healthy: the dangerous years are those of youth—child mortality is shockingly high. Those who survive are tough—or they would not survive. The proportion of centenarians in Bulgaria is one of the highest in Europe and far above ours. Peasant costumes have hardly changed in their fashion in the last five hundred years—and are entirely homemade.

When a man needs a new suit, he does not go to a tailor—except in sophisticated places like Sofia and Varna. Let us assume that little Tommy needs a new pair of trousers, as he is a growing lad. Father goes out to shear a couple of sheep: mother washes the wool, and then gets busy winding it into thread. As she walks along the road, or talks with her neighbours, you will see her distaff under her right arm, a bunch of wool tied near one end of the three-foot pole by a leather thong. With her left hand she twists out the thread, winding it on to a coloured bobbin.

When enough bobbins are ready, she begins to use the hand-and-foot loom, weaving the cloth. After weeks of patient work, she will dye the cloth—for a variegated pattern, of course, she dyes the thread before weaving. The dyes are produced from herbs grown in the garden, or gathered from the woods. Then mother will turn tailor: and, many weeks after the suggestion was first mooted, little Tommy will get his new breeches.

Bulgaria is a land of villages. There are only ten towns housing populations of 25,000 or over. The 6,000,000 Bulgars occupy no fewer than 800,000 agricultural holdings—of which 735,000 are self-owned. There are only 100,000 landless families—including all the professional classes. The average acreage is fifteen, but a tidying up of Bulgaria's farms is long overdue: a small farm of this size will often consist of five or six fields scattered over as many miles, very difficult to work economically. It is no wonder that Balkan agricultural methods are primitive. Tractors are almost unknown, and would be useless on such tiny holdings. In Bulgaria in 1936 there were only 254,000 iron ploughs—and 450,000 wooden ones! And there were only 100 seed-planters in the whole country! A hundred years ago a British visitor reported that Balkan ploughs and harrows were no more than branches of trees, with twisted osiers as ropes: the rude carts had solid wooden wheels. Even now such things may be seen occasionally—in use, not in museums.

I have seen fields turned by the wooden plough drawn by two stolid oxen (it is even today not unknown for the plough to be pulled by two men—or women; because they cannot plough

deeply, they must cover the ground three or four times). The seed was sown by hand. At the time of harvest, men and women attacked the crop with sickles: then the wheat was beaten out with a flail, or trodden out by horses tramping out a circle through the straw. Then it was carried to the winnowing floor, of dried mud: it was flung into the wind by a wooden spade: the chaff was blown away, while the heavier grain fell direct to the floor.

In recent years modern agricultural machinery has been invading the Balkans; but there are still thousands of peasants who use the methods of generations ago. And with these they try to compete with the vast modernity of Canada and Argentina! Small wonder that their standard of living is so low. Today there is a tendency to abandon the impossible competition, and to lower the acreage devoted to grain in favour of fruit, tobacco, and market garden produce.

The standard of living would be lower still but for the amazing self-sufficiency of the villages: until recently, indeed, each family was virtually self-supporting. It is not even necessary to buy a box of matches: any Bulgarian peasant can produce fire with the aid of firesticks, or of flint and steel. (He disobeys the law in doing so, for the government owns the match monopoly.) For festive occasions the housewife makes her own *slivovitz*, a plum brandy brewed in primitive stills, and sometimes of a villainous strength.

The principal crops are wheat and corn, but tobacco is increasingly important—it was often marketed as “Turkish.” In the south, cotton and even rice are cultivated. Most romantic of all crops is the rose. There is a famous valley in Southern Bulgaria, the Valley of Roses. Here conditions of soil and sun combine to give a remarkable quality of scent to the flowers, and from this valley comes 75 per cent of the world’s supply of attar of roses, the basis of most perfumes. The scene in spring is amazing, square miles of bushes, *Rosa damascena* and *Rosa alba*. Early in the morning an army of girls invades the valley, picking the small buds before they open. Then a yellow-green oil is distilled, which eventually sets like vaseline. Many processes are necessary before the perfume appears in my lady’s boudoir, but the attar is the

essential basis. It commands a price of \$400 a pound—and the Valley of Roses produces 6,000 pounds annually.

Let us glance at a Bulgarian village, key to the national life. There are few outlying farms: instead, the houses cluster together for protection and for collective welfare. There is a strong community feeling in most Balkan villages. In each there are usually a stretch of common ground, a communal forest: the elders administrate their use, allocate the collective work—road repairs and the like—and even give the young folk permission to marry.

The centre of the village is the church, of the Bulgarian Orthodox persuasion: often its garish curves and bulbous domes contrast unhappily with the simplicity of the village architecture. I would not class the Bulgar as equal to the other Slavs in the fervour of his faith: generally, religious emotion is one of the features of the Slav tribes. The Bulgar lacks the mysticism of the Russians, Poles, and Serbs. To him, God is not some mysterious spiritual power, but a good friend: He gives the crops, therefore it is only fair to thank Him: if you don't, He may give you a poor harvest next year! There is more than a grain of superstition in the Bulgarian's religion. Yet he has always been faithful to his church—maybe he has regarded it as a symbol of nationality, even more important to him than his religious beliefs. To his credit, however, must be placed the fact that few of his tribe could be tempted to adopt the Moslem creed during the long Turkish régime, when there were obvious advantages in so doing. The few who did, called Pomaks, were not regarded with sympathy!

Maybe a stream runs down the middle of the village: then there will be ducks and geese in evidence. (Their values are twenty-five and fifty cents respectively.) The well is the vital centre of the village: here the women indulge in the most pleasant of pastimes, gossip.

The modern houses of the village have two stories. They will probably be all timber, though in some districts bricks of dried mud are favoured: the roofs may be thatched, shingled, or even red-tiled. The older homes will follow the traditional pattern:

each consists of one long timber and mud hut, the floor let into the earth like a cellar, two feet above the level of the ground. There will be no windows: the door will be a plain wooden structure, the roof of thatch. Costs are not high: a modern two-roomed cottage can be erected for about \$100.

I sat with a peasant family by the stone fireplace: the smoke curled lazily above us, seeking an egress under the eaves—more than once I was deceived into thinking that a cottage was on fire. (At one time the Turks placed a tax on all chimneys, so the Balkan peasants dispensed with such luxuries.) Our meal was simple: we had black bread, paprika soup, and cheese made from sheep's milk: as a dessert, sour milk and apples. The peasant standard of life would be classed as low in Western Europe: his diet is wholesome, but very lacking in variety. The small size of the plots means that everybody in Bulgaria is poor: yet, because everybody is in close contact with the soil, nobody ever starves.

It was late evening: children sprawled about the floor, asleep in the attitudes into which they had relaxed from their play. The women of the house put shawls and sheepskins over them as the air became cool.

Sheepskins were provided for me: we lay on the floor. There was no undressing—which was perhaps just as well, for the women wear no underclothes. These are held to be modern garments of shame: only a loose woman needs to wear knickers.

Three dogs, a calf, and a goat joined us. The scene was as primitive as anything to be found in Europe. The standards of rural Bulgaria today are rising, but those I have described are still common.

Now it is a frequent argument that low conditions of living breed disease and immorality. This may be true in English-speaking countries, but not in Bulgaria. There is naturally a wide difference between the Bulgarian hovel and the East End slum. The Bulgar has fresh air and healthy work all day at any rate. There is a flourishing communal life and ideal, whereas a city slum is just a random dump of human beings, with no apparent function

and few, if any, ideals—and with consequent ease of descent to low ideas of living.

I have already commented on the physical toughness and longevity of the Bulgars: their moral standards are among the highest in Europe. In such conditions neither the conception of babies nor their delivery can be any secret mystery. Discussion of sexual problems is open and frank. Once I saw young men bathing in the Danube, while the girls held their clothes. I joined them, handing my clothes to the nearest unoccupied girl. My nudity attracted no attention: but any presumptuous suggestion would have had an unhappy welcome!

It is quite common for brother and sister to live together—but incest is unknown: the bond of the family is sacred. The illegitimacy rate is only 1.2 per cent. Even this is double what it used to be only fifty years ago—indignant Bulgars blame “modern civilization” for its rise. Young people marry early: it is quite common for a woman to be a grandmother at forty.

The educational level is high by Balkan standards. The Bulgarian peasant, one of the thriftiest men in the world, not only will spend but will borrow money to pay for the education of his children. Of the men conscripted in Bulgaria during the last war, 89 per cent were literate. This compares more than favourably with the figures of 70 per cent, 49 per cent, and 38 per cent for Greece, Serbia, and Roumania respectively. But more schools are urgently needed, as every Bulgar realizes. Education is always difficult in rural communities, where the normal school comprises forty or fifty children of all ages—and one teacher! Britain has the same problem—but there are more villages in Bulgaria.

Too much can be read into a high figure for literacy. The Bulgarian school system seemed to me to place undue emphasis on the cramming of knowledge, and far too little on the development of intelligence, initiative, and individual expression. Again, the complaint is not confined to Bulgaria! Nevertheless, with their many difficulties the Bulgars have done remarkably well. A hundred years ago there were no schools at all: if a Bulgar turned Moslem his children could go to one of the mosque

schools; or the Bulgarian monasteries, where they existed, provided the barest rudiments of education. The first printed book in Bulgaria did not appear until 1806! When I saw the modern agricultural colleges, and when I talked of future plans with Bulgarian educationalists, comparing their ideas with the legacy they had inherited from the Turkish régime, I marvelled that so much had been done in so short a time.

Indeed, modern education has progressed so rapidly as to introduce a problem not unknown in other lands. Only in Scotland and Scandinavia is there a real appreciation of education for its own sake. Elsewhere there is a common outlook, "What am I going to get out of it?" In India, while the population was illiterate, control was easy: we introduced far-reaching educational schemes. Then, every man with a university degree seemed to imagine that he had a right to a government job: if he didn't get one, he joined a malcontent party. So it was in Bulgaria, where the number of government and professional posts is necessarily small. If we are not very careful, it may also follow from our own educational plans: we have to teach that knowledge is not merely a basis of making a living: it is an essential background to life. In Bulgaria the professional politicians, recruited from the unemployed of the liberal professions, have been the scourge of the country.

One influence has been strong in Bulgaria, as in all Balkan countries. Once I rode a bicycle across the Danube plain. The road, no more than a dirt-track, divided into three paths: the map gave no indication as to which I should follow. I sat down to wait.

An hour later a peasant hove in sight, moving slowly in his wagon drawn by patient, plodding water-buffalo. I rehearsed my query in Bulgarian, "Please, can you tell me the way to Levski?" and fired it at him. He looked at me strangely and replied in broad American: "Sure! Follow that track to the right."

The returned emigrant from America is a feature of most Balkan villages. After working in the United States for twenty years, he has retired on his savings: money standards are so different that he can live at ease. I found one man who was now the



"squire" of a Bulgarian village—on his savings as a motorman in Vancouver!

But the influence of these men is not only financial. They bring new ideas into the simple villages: of luxuries which can become necessities, of living conditions unknown in these parts. They prompt uneasy questionings: why should a Bulgar work harder than an American, yet receive so little when the American gets so much? As yet, most American ideas are undigested—few Bulgars remain long enough to appreciate more than their superficialities. Yet they have their influence: so have American films, a potentially serious invasion. We shall discuss their effects later. In Bulgaria they have been neutralized to some extent by Russian films—which had a wide circulation and influence until the Bulgarian government stepped in.

I always got on well with the Bulgarian peasant. He has his faults, in which he is not alone. It is easy to trace most of them to the effects of the long centuries of Turkish subjection: history cannot be eradicated in a night, or even in a hundred years. The Bulgar is an individualist: he is obstinate, self-confident, and very practical. He is suspicious: throughout his history, so it seems to him, every man's hand has been against him. Like the man from Missouri, he takes nothing on trust; he must be shown—must have a thing put in his hand. He is a hard bargainer, but he will fulfil his share—and expects you to fulfil yours. He is the hardest man in the Balkans, which is saying a great deal. When he is beaten, he bides his time—he learned the necessity for patience under the Turks. He has a long memory, readily explained by history. He is short-sighted and self-centred: yet no man in all Europe has a greater love for his native land, or has so proved that love by a very practical devotion and sacrifice.

There is little frivolity in the Bulgar's life, which has almost a Puritan character. Even on his fête days he is more restrained in his rejoicing than his brother Slavs. He is frugal—he has never had a chance of being anything else. A labourer's wage is about fifty cents a day. A Civil Servant may earn \$5 a week. The Prime Minister receives only \$3,000 a year. No wonder that the Bulgar

considers his pennies: he is generally regarded as the Scotsman of the Balkans.

This, then, is a superficial picture of the Bulgar and his home: a land of little farms, isolated villages, and dust roads, always with a distant vista of forbidding mountains: of small unkempt horses harnessed to light wagons, the foals running beside their mothers: of flocks of black and white sheep on the grassy slopes: of oxen and black water-buffalo as beasts of burden: of women working in the fields—often bearing their babies there: of a sturdy, stocky race of people, hard-working and reliable, making every use of a land which can keep them alive, even if it cannot provide luxuries. With such a background, how does it come about that the modern record and present condition of Bulgaria are so deplorable? The following sections will provide the answer. Bulgaria has suffered grievously from the accidents of history: we must now study its course if we are to understand the difficulties of this people of high potentialities, who have in our lifetime been regarded as the black sheep of the Balkan flock. I believe that the Bulgar will develop as a very useful member of the European family: he has the good earth beneath his feet, and a clean blue sky above him.

### III

Some statistics may be essential for the completion of our Bulgarian picture: those quoted are the latest available, but do not include territorial gains made during the present war.

Bulgaria is the second smallest of the Balkan states, covering 103,000 square kilometres—about 40,000 square miles. Of these, only 37,000 square kilometres are cultivable: thus, while the total population of 6,371,000 gives an average density of 62 to the square kilometre, the density in the cultivable areas is 113 to the square kilometre—and 50 is reckoned by experts as the optimum which the land can support.

Of the population, 821,000 are Moslems:<sup>1</sup> the bulk of the

<sup>1</sup> Of these, about one-sixth are Pomaks—Bulgarian Moslems; the remainder, Turks.

remainder follow the Orthodox creed. Ethnically, the population of Bulgaria is the most compact of the Balkans, except that of Albania. This is due to the fact that these two countries recovered their freedom last, so were late in the scramble for territory. Over 80 per cent of the people are Bulgars—a remarkable proportion in this part of the world: 10 per cent Turks: the remainder consists of oddments of gypsies, Germans, Roumanians, and other Balkan races.

As we have seen, Bulgarian industries are negligible—the most remunerative are the preparation of tobacco, of rose oil, and flour milling. There are some mines of soft coal, which yield over a million metric tons a year. There are probably ample deposits of other minerals in the Bulgarian mountains, but they have not yet been surveyed.

Tobacco is the principal export, but wheat, barley, rye, corn, and potatoes are important crops. The Bulgar is a famous market gardener, and can usually be found outside the towns in other Balkan countries. The wool production is small, considering the number of sheep. Nor is the wool of good quality. This applies to the Balkans generally, where it is customary to milk the ewes, using the milk for cheese. This always has the effect of lowering the quality of the animal's wool.

I have referred to the fact that 82 per cent of the population is directly employed on the land, which is now overcrowded. The rate of natural increase had dropped from 18.2 per thousand per annum in 1921-25 to 10.3 in 1936-38, but the British rate is only 3.2 per thousand. The limitation of emigration means that the rural population of Bulgaria increased from 3,100,000 in 1910 to 4,300,000 in 1936. The result is inevitably a lower standard of living.

About 200,000 labourers emigrate for seasonal periods—usually the harvest: mostly to Roumania and Hungary. Poor conditions recently in these countries hit this traffic hard: although the pay was little more than twenty-five cents a day, it meant a lot to men who had so little.

Agricultural stock is limited. The whole country boasts only

1,800,000 cattle, and 9,000,000 sheep—poor figures for a purely agricultural community. Yet what might be starvation levels are averted by the wide spread of the land into small farms—only 210,000 men and women work on the land for wages—and by the remarkable self-contained character of the village communities: of commodities in daily use, only coffee and salt are not home-produced, and only soap and paraffin are essential purchases.

In the Roumanian chapter we shall have to discuss the Jewish village trader of the Balkans. He is not as prevalent in Bulgaria as elsewhere, and the government has been more progressive. There are 2,500 rural co-operative societies and banks, which provide 80 per cent of the credits advanced to peasants. In one respect Bulgaria has been comparatively fortunate. Graft and speculation, relics of Turkish rule, are still the perquisites of the professional politician class, but are not nearly as wide or as devastating in their effects as in other Balkan countries.

I have said that the Bulgars live long, and have long memories. Both characteristics affect their everyday outlook. I have listened to fearsome stories from aged ladies describing how they were raped by Turkish irregulars half a century ago. In one village I met a man—aged 104—who took part in a romantic and much-sung episode in Bulgarian history. In 1876 Christo Botiov, a poet, crossed the Danube into Bulgaria with a band of comrades: for months they harried the Turks, until Botiov was killed: but his verses remained. Just as nearly every Victorian home had a picture of "The Death of Nelson," so nearly every Bulgarian cottage today features an oleograph of Botiov holding up an Austrian steamer, and forcing its captain to carry his men across the Danube. The trivial point has real significance. These Bulgars have lived the most exciting parts of their history recently, not a thousand years ago. The effect on their minds has been real and dramatic. It is not possible to divorce a people from its history.

I have emphasized that Bulgaria is overwhelmingly peasant, and that peasants seldom get a fair deal. Their 82 per cent of the population receives only 53 per cent of the national income—and this figure is high for the Balkans. In the last parliament

elected by approximately democratic methods, lawyers secured 38 seats; bankers, 10—the peasants got only 22 out of a total of 86.

The annual income per head of the population, including goods received in kind as well as cash, was \$80 in 1935. Calculated per occupied person and adjusted in terms of purchasing power, it was \$140—about one-sixth of the British figure. British comparisons in money can be misleading: purchasing power is the real criterion. An English labourer can buy a pair of shoes at a cost of two or three days' wages: the Bulgarian peasant would have to work thirty-five days to get a pair—not nearly of such good quality. Two pounds of paraffin will cost him sixty-six eggs, or six chickens. He is always in debt—either to the village storekeeper or to the government bank. And of his meagre earnings one-half go in taxation.

It will be necessary to repeat in every chapter that the raising of this low standard of life is one of the outstanding problems of the Balkans. We face a fantastic situation when a Bulgarian peasant, who could at least feed himself and his family, even if he could not afford to buy shoes, has to sell an undue proportion of his produce and thereby approach starvation level—in order to pay his taxes. His tragedy has been intensified by the difficulty of marketing and the low prices obtained, always increasing the proportion he had to give up. Small wonder that politicians failed to solve his problem—and that the peasant looks for some panacea which will remove all evils. A man in desperation can be easily misled.

Later we must consider the effects of economic conditions: but immediately we must study the impact of history upon the Bulgarian mind and character.

#### IV

Nobody knows the original home of the Bulgars. It may have been China: some ethnologists believe that they are akin to the Magyars, Estonians, Finns, and even to the Turks. They were

first heard of as a nomadic tribe in the Volga region in the first centuries of the Christian era: fierce, pagan warriors, they made periodic incursions into the outlying provinces of the Roman Empire: it may be from the Volga that the Bulgars took their name.<sup>1</sup>

In A.D. 559 a Bulgarian leader failed to halt at the traditional boundary for these raids, the Danube. Finding the river frozen, he led his horsemen across and penetrated as far as the walls of Constantinople. Only the courage and resource of the Emperor Belisarius saved the city. The Bulgars retired, but some of them stayed south of the Danube: the "bridge head" thus formed was soon reinforced from the periodical raids during the following century.

The newcomers found a pastoral district, inhabited by tribes of Slav stock—inevitably with an admixture of earlier Illyrian and Thracian peoples. These peasants were in no condition to resist the conquering Bulgars, who soon became masters of the land. Then followed a remarkable example of a victory for passive resistance. The Bulgars had conquered the local Slavs—but now adopted the language and customs of their subjects. This event is unique only in its extent: it was more thorough than the absorption of the Normans in England. It was quite common, even in much later days, for victorious armies to be demobilized in the countries they had conquered, and it often happened that they were assimilated by the local inhabitants. In French-speaking Quebec are to be found families of Macgregors and O'Haras, descendants of the men of Wolfe's army who married French-Canadian girls, and adopted their language, culture, and religion. The Bulgars had left their own women behind when they set off on their warlike raids. They killed off many of the Serbian men, and seized their wives and daughters. The invaders were so few in number that they adopted polygamy freely, so that every woman might have a husband.

<sup>1</sup> Some students believe that the word is derived from Bolagalars, meaning ploughmen. This does not fit very exactly with the character of the original invaders!

The conquering Bulgars were not savages. Their armies were disciplined and well equipped. Their political organization was based on a loose personal allegiance, akin to the feudal system in Western Europe. As they settled down in the Danubian valley, they became as passionately attached to its soil as the indigenous Serbs they had conquered. Later, they borrowed political and cultural ideas freely from neighbouring Byzantium, as Constantinople (or, later, Istanbul) was then called.

Against that same neighbour they fought such a continuous series of wars as to deny themselves the possibility of peaceful development. Three times in five hundred years Bulgarian empires stretched over wide areas of the Balkans: most of these depended upon the personal vigour of the Bulgarian tsars ("Caesars"—a Roman title gained via Byzantium), and tended to dissolve when a weaker monarch succeeded. Though they had now settled as agriculturalists, the Bulgars maintained their renown as men of war. They expected no mercy, and gave none. When a Bulgarian tsar killed a Roman Byzantine emperor, he fashioned the skull of his opponent into a drinking cup.

Then, in the ninth century, the pagan Bulgars accepted Christianity. St. Cyril, the monk who converted them and their neighbours, the Serbs, brought them more than a religion: he brought the first taste of education—including the alphabet which bears his name—the first time the Slav tongue had been reduced to writing.

It was the second Bulgarian Empire, during the thirteenth century, which achieved the widest power and fame, straddling the Balkans from sea to sea. I have seen its capital, Trnovo, one of the most remarkable cities in the whole of Europe.

I confess that when I first went to Bulgaria many years ago, I had never heard of Trnovo. (Though the Tsar's eldest son takes his princely title from the city.) But, as I rode across the country on a bicycle, peasants said, "Of course, you are going to Trnovo." It struck me as being somewhat strange in Bulgaria where, as I have said, people are not especially interested in ancient glories. So I went to Trnovo: now I am amazed at my previous ignorance.

For two hundred years the city was the capital of a great empire. The ruins of its palaces and churches indicate its grandeur. To judge by the accounts of visiting Crusaders and of Froissart, at this period Bulgarian culture was at least equal to that of Western Europe.

Trnovo is a fascinating place: the little river Yantra has carved out a great gorge in its passage through the mountains—two great loops which almost meet. The houses are steeply and picturesquely terraced, the roof of one touching the foundations of the next. Dominating the city is the hill called the Tsarevitz, where the Tsar's palace stood: the nobles had to be content with houses on a slightly lower hill: opposite is the sacred Wood of the Nightingales, where polytheistic Bulgaria worshipped its native gods before the advent of Christianity.

While many of the historic buildings are abject ruins, enough remain to show that the level of Bulgarian culture was indeed high. Best of all is the adjoining Monastery of the Transfiguration, a centre of religious influence for many centuries. I found it high on the mountainside, ensconced in a forest, its oriental buildings grouped about a picturesque courtyard. And from this place of peace, whose monks reflected its atmosphere of grace, I could gaze down the valley to the Rock of Destiny, a gaunt precipice, over which prisoners used to be hurled to death. This was a popular Balkan custom—revived by the Russians during their war with the Turks in 1877.

In its day Trnovo almost rivalled the magnificence of Constantinople: but its night fell. The Bulgars quarrelled among themselves: for a time a Serbian tsar was master of the land. On his death the fratricidal Balkan wars continued. History may not identically repeat itself, but some of its courses are reminiscent of earlier tragedies. Twice in our own lifetime the Bulgars failed to appreciate that unity is essential when danger threatens. They cannot complain that they were not well warned—maybe their fate would have been happier if they *had* thought a little less of today and a little more of the events of yesterday.

In the middle of the fourteenth century the Turks had begun to swarm into Europe. The warring princelings and trifling king-



doms were easy prey, in their weakness inevitably suggesting the "crocodile" method of swallowing one by one, later practised successfully by Hitler. When at the very last moment the Slav tribes of the Balkans did attempt to unite against the invader, it was too late. Bulgars fought by the side of the Serbs on the disastrous Field of the Blackbirds at Kossovo in 1389; four years later Trnovo fell to the Turks. The great days of Bulgaria were over: for nearly five hundred years its people passed into captivity: the amazing feature is that they then emerged—still Bulgars.

## V

True, except in moments of religious exultation, the Turks did not massacre their subject populations as often or as ruthlessly as some historians pretend. The Bulgars were too useful to work the land for the *spahis* (the landlords rewarded by the Sultan for services in the field). They were heavily taxed, had no civil rights—indeed, were treated as an inferior race: but their communal village settlements—taken over from the earlier Serbian inhabitants—were usually left undisturbed. There were occasional efforts to convert the Bulgars to the Moslem creed: the results were very limited. Occasionally, today, you will find Moslem communities in the Rhodope valleys: Pomaks, the people are called. They wear Turkish costume, and the women are veiled, but their speech is Bulgar. Indeed, they are probably the purest Bulgar stock in the Balkans, for they have never intermarried with neighbouring peoples: not even with their co-religionists, the Turks.

Medieval travellers scarcely noted the existence of a Bulgarian people, so complete was its submergence. The rise of Russia in the eighteenth century led to a crusade of pan-Slav ideas. The Russians had territorial designs upon Turkey, including Constantinople. It is always advisable to have a good moral cover for aggression, and the Tsars found it in the protection of the Christian subjects of the Turks. Certainly such consideration for peasants was long overdue in the Balkans—as it was in Russia.

Religion had kept Bulgaria alive. Even in the darkest days, the

scattered monasteries continued their cultural activities. Gradually, national consciousness was reborn—aided, as always, by the generous influence of exiles whose viewpoint was wider than that of the village peasant. The liberal ideas of the last century penetrated even into the Balkan valleys: they were encouraged rather than hindered by the ruthless Turkish methods of repression.



#### BULGARIA AND THE SAN STEFANO FRONTIERS.

The map shows the territories allotted to the freed Bulgarians by the Russian-Turkish Treaty of San Stefano; they include the greater part of Macedonia. The map also indicates the much smaller area allocated to Bulgaria by the Treaty of Berlin, which cancelled San Stefano. The "San Stefano frontiers" remain the ambition of Bulgarian nationalists, who wish to recover the Macedonian territory from Yugoslavia and Greece.

In 1877 Russia declared war on Turkey. With the assistance of Bulgarian and Roumanian forces, the Russians were victorious. By the Treaty of San Stefano, the Turks granted virtual independence to their Bulgarian subjects. What is more, the Bulgars would have ruled over large numbers of Greeks, Serbs, and Albanians, for the frontiers resembled those of the old Bulgarian empires.

The Western Powers were alarmed—Britain especially. They had followed the policy of “bolstering up” Turkey, and of discounting Christian claims, not from any liking for that country or hostility to Balkan Christians, but because of suspicion of Russia. Everybody was quite willing that the “sick man of Europe” should die, but each wanted to be his heir: or, at least, to ensure that the heritage did not go to Russia. Now it appeared that the Bulgarian empire was to be revived, and that it would be a mere Russian dependency; the very situation, in fact, which some people seem to envisage after the present war.

The Congress of Berlin resulted. It redrew the map of the Balkans: the only people not consulted were the folk most concerned, the Bulgars, the Greeks, and the Serbs. Lord Beaconsfield (Disraeli) knew nothing of Bulgaria and cared less: he was determined to limit the power of Russia. The Austrians were equally suspicious of the extension of Russian power in the Balkans.

In the result, a principality of Bulgaria was formed, with a separate southern province given the name of Eastern Roumelia. The compromise was artificial: once the seeds of nationalism have been sown in fertile soil, nothing can stop their growth. It was only a question of time before the Bulgars threw over the suzerainty still imposed at Berlin: but the treaty did succeed in its main object, the limitation of the power of Tsarist Russia.

It is important to emphasize this by repetition: the Treaty of San Stefano, imposed by Russia on Turkey in 1878, put a Great Bulgaria on the map. Its frontiers extended across the whole of Macedonia, and included a wide stretch of the Aegean coast-line. Then the other Great Powers stepped in, reduced the Great Bulgaria to a Little Bulgaria, and restored Macedonia and Thrace to

Turkish rule. Here is the key to current Balkan squabbles: very many Bulgars still dream of the San Stefano frontiers as their natural right.

It is also important to point out that although the treaty was nullified by the Great Powers it was equally obnoxious to smaller states: Greece and Serbia in particular, for both were casting anxious eyes on Macedonia.

In these two considerations we have the germs of one of the fiercest Balkan quarrels of today. It is in 1878 that we find the real reasons why Bulgaria fought against us in 1915 and 1941. We shall see that she exercised an influence far beyond that of her natural strength. Obviously we have to be much more far-sighted in our future moves: and better informed than Disraeli was.

## VI

It was only natural that the Bulgars should turn to the liberating Russians for assistance and for advice in the use of their new freedom. Russian officials set up the first government organization: Russians trained and officered the new Bulgarian army. And although their chosen prince was a German—Alexander of Battenberg—he was the favourite nephew of the Tsar, by whom he was always dominated. Then followed the inevitable reaction. As the Bulgars sensed the power of their freedom and learned very rapidly all their friends had to teach, they resented the presence of Russian administrators and officers: would-be benefactors are seldom loved. Nevertheless, dislike for the Russians as rulers never eliminated the Bulgarian gratitude to them as their deliverers from the Turkish yoke. This sentiment has powerful influences even today. But the Bulgarians did *not* want their country to become a Russian province.

The story of European politics makes strange reading. When eventually Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia made their inevitable and natural union in 1885, Russia was gravely displeased—and Britain supported the move! By this time we had come to look upon a strong Bulgaria as a barrier to Russia's Balkan ambitions,

rather than as a Russian steppingstone on the way to Constantinople.

Alexander abdicated, unhappy at the conflict of his loyalties to his chosen people and his Russian uncle. His successor, Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, faced a troubled heritage. The country was divided, despite the strong personality of its Prime Minister, Stambulov. Political usages were very Balkan, mostly of Turkish origin. One of the pleasures of success was the punishment of opponents. The Bulgars developed an amazing capacity for intrigue, and eventually beat the Russian agents at their own game. But through all the conflicts, internal and external, the national spirit burned fiercely. It expressed itself in the advancement of education and the construction of communications. At the turn of the century these were crude enough by Western European standards, but were an amazing advance on those of twenty years before.

## VII

It was bad enough that Bulgaria should be used as a puppet for manipulation by the Great Powers: dangerous enough to have Turkey on the flank—for the "sick man of Europe" obstinately refused to die, and occasionally exhibited signs of remarkable vitality. Bulgaria's situation was rendered even more uneasy by quarrels with her neighbours, Serbia, Roumania, and Greece. Each of the four countries had territorial aspirations, for thousands of their peoples still lay under the Turkish yoke. The trouble was that many of their aspirations clashed.

I have already indicated the principal point of quarrel—Macedonia. For the next sixty years it was doomed to dominate the Balkan story.

On your atlas of 1919-39 publication it is unlikely that you will find Macedonia marked on the map. The southern portion of it, the hinterland of Salonika, was in Greece; the eastern fringe, in Bulgaria; and the greater part, in Yugoslavia—this section may be marked as "South Serbia."

In ancient days Macedonia had been the headquarters of a

mighty empire, but at the time of Christ it was no more than an unimportant Roman province. Then came the succession of invading tribes sweeping and receding across the Balkans from many directions. Macedonia was the district where they met. The resultant ethnic medley can be imagined: it is one of the most complicated in Europe: the word *macedoine*, a culinary mixture, was coined from Macedonia. The dominating blood was Slavonic, and the local dialect was akin to Bulgarian. The Macedonians might reasonably be considered as a connecting link between the Serb and Bulgar branches of the Slav race.

It is not an especially attractive country. Its valleys are green in spring but parched in autumn. Its mountains make communications difficult. Its soil is not very fertile, but the extreme poverty of its people may be explained rather by the wars which have ravaged it. To assist in its record of misery, it lies on both the earthquake and the malaria belt of Southern Europe.

In 1878, at the time of San Stefano, the population of Macedonia was about one million. Greeks inhabited most of the coastal districts, and there were many settlements of Vlachs,<sup>1</sup> Serbs, and Turks: but many of the Macedonian peasants of the interior classed themselves as Bulgars. I have suggested that this is unsound as a basis of ethnic classification, though it was as Bulgars that they were persecuted by the Turks.

It is true that no small part of the Bulgarian consciousness of the Macedonians was of recent origin. The Turks, to weaken the power of the Greek Patriarch, had allowed the Bulgarian Exarch to extend his authority over the greater part of Macedonia. (The Exarchate followed the Greek Orthodox rites, but claimed independence of Greek control.) Since at that time the Church held a monopoly of all religious, moral, and political education, its influence can be imagined. Yet the first ambition of the Macedonians was to obtain their freedom from Turkish rule: they would have welcomed Serbian aid just as readily: the fact that help first came from Bulgaria was destined to have vital consequences.

Nevertheless, it should never be forgotten that in 1878 the

<sup>1</sup> The Vlachs, or Wallachs, were a pastoral tribe of Roumanian origin.

population of Macedonia included large Greek and other non-Slav elements. They were just as eager to rid themselves of the Turkish oppression, but had no wish to invite a Bulgar domination in its place.

After the Treaty of Berlin, the attenuated Turkish Empire in Europe consisted in the main of the district about Constantinople, Albania, and Macedonia. Racial consciousness was now thoroughly roused. It is significant that most Macedonians, when they fled from Turkish oppression, went to Bulgaria. Half the population of Sofia today is of Macedonian origin—which will explain a very great deal.

Neither in Bulgaria nor in Macedonia was there any pretence of accepting the imposed Treaty of Berlin. Eventually Turkish tyranny was countered by Macedonian terrorism—and for once the Turks had to admit their masters in this art. In 1893 two Bulgar schoolmasters founded the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, commonly known as I.M.R.O. These men, Damian Gruev and Pere Tochev, were ardent patriots, and were esteemed as such by the liberal states of the West. Their war-cry was "Liberty or Death for Macedonia"—and in view of the subsequent argument, it is necessary to emphasize the words "*for Macedonia*"; there was no mention of Bulgaria, Serbia, or Greece. They fought an underground war against the Turkish tyranny, returning blow for blow. Yet their movement had a moral basis, the cause of liberty. It flourished exceedingly: patriotism was its religion—recruits had to swear eternal loyalty on a revolver and a dagger in the form of a cross. The Turks were well served by their spies: they tortured, raped, and massacred. The patriots formed *komitadji*, or irregular bands, and took to the mountains, and a guerrilla warfare of intense ferocity began.

Now when, in 1912, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece formed a coalition to drive the Turks out of Europe—or at least to liberate the surviving populations of their own races—very wisely they divided the prospective spoils before they began. But over Macedonia they could not agree—all three had serious claims. The Greeks were emphatic that Salonika was Greek—which was

largely true—and claimed that the Macedonian hinterland should go with its port. The Serbs pointed out that Macedonia had been an integral part of the great Serbian Empire: that the people were a Slav tribe akin to the Serbs; and that access to the Aegean Sea was vital to the new nation—Greece already had a hundred harbours, while Serbia had none. Bulgaria claimed that Macedonia had formed an integral part of *two* Bulgar empires: that the Macedonians were a Bulgar tribe, much nearer ethnically to the Bulgars than to the Serbs: that they spoke a Bulgarian dialect, and that culturally they leaned to Bulgaria. Further, Bulgaria had done the greater part of the work of making the Macedonians freedom-conscious.

There had been some discussion between Bulgaria and Serbia on the subject of an autonomous Macedonia—each country hoping to attract the province into its own orbit. Eventually a compromise scheme was adopted, so as to allow a common front to be presented against the Turkish oppressor: the northern section of Macedonia was to go to Serbia, the east to Bulgaria, and the rest was to be left to the arbitration of the Tsar of Russia.

The geographical basis of the war upset this sensible compromise. By virtue of their situation, the Bulgars advanced towards Constantinople: theirs was the heaviest share of the combat, and they fought with their traditional gallantry—their losses far exceeding those of their allies. In the meantime Greeks occupied Salonika, and Serbs marched into Macedonia. By April, 1913, Turkey was beaten to the knees.

Then, as was inevitable, the Balkan allies quarrelled among themselves. There is no reason for surprise in this: rather, it was amazing that they had ever agreed to make common cause, so deep was the mutual suspicion. It was fostered and fomented by the rival proddings of Austria and Russia: but for their jealousies, there might never have been a Macedonian problem. The Russians, believing that Bulgaria would become a satellite state, encouraged wide expansionist ideas. The Austrians tried to divert Serbia from her legitimate claims on Bosnia and Herzegovina by supporting her aspirations farther south.



Serbs and Greeks, in firm possession of the disputed territory, were not now anxious for the Tsar's arbitration. The Bulgars were apprehensive, believing that they were to be cheated. Greece and Serbia saw what was coming: Bulgaria claimed that her old allies were about to attack her. On June 1, 1913, they signed a treaty of mutual defence. The Tsar moved to halt the conflict, but Austria encouraged it—Balkan wars meant Balkan weakness, with better opportunities for intrigue. On June 29th Bulgaria turned to attack her former allies: Austrian intrigues were backed by Germany, who wanted a weak and demented Balkans so as to favour her own schemes: the Kaiser Wilhelm II reversed Bismarck's policy of uninterestedness.

All this time Roumania had stood aloof from the conflict—her frontiers no longer marched with those of Turkey. On July 10th she joined in, her armies crossing the Danube into Bulgaria: there was nothing to stop them—all able-bodied Bulgars were fighting in Macedonia. Hopelessly outnumbered, the Bulgars had to give in. Macedonia was partitioned between Greece and Serbia, only the eastern fragment going to Bulgaria.

The consequences of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 were serious. Bulgaria lost the sympathy of the world by her treacherous attack on her allies: and her reaction to this followed the normal pattern—sullen resentment. Her temper was such that it was certain that she would espouse the cause of anyone who would aid her revenge and the regaining of what she had lost.

This was an unfortunate outlook on the verge of the First World War. Yet one further feature of the Balkan struggle has not yet witnessed its final consequences: the Bulgar peasants, who had fought with desperate valour against the Turks, advanced only reluctantly against their cousin-Slavs, the Serbs.

## VIII

There is a school of thought among Englishmen which argues that European squabbles have nothing to do with them. Its exponents would laugh at me if I suggested that the Macedonian

problem was a matter of vital importance to Britain. Yet Macedonia has already cost the lives of half a million British soldiers, and the maiming of a million more.

This is not conjecture, but solid fact. Consider the situation at Christmas, 1914. Britain was at war with Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey. Of these, easily the weakest was Turkey. Further, the defeat of Turkey would have had most important strategic consequences, since it would have opened the Dardanelles for supplies to hard-pressed and ill equipped Russia.

In such circumstances Britain looked about for allies in the Balkans. The natural enemy of the Balkan states was Turkey: the natural protector of the little Slav nations of Serbia and Bulgaria was Russia. The Bulgars had already shown what they could do against the Turks: a Bulgarian onslaught towards Constantinople, and a British demonstration at the Dardanelles, and Turkey was doomed. The subsequent potentialities were obvious—not merely the reinforcement of Russia, but a favourable opportunity of attacking Austria-Hungary in the rear. No military knowledge is necessary to appreciate this—a glance at the map is enough.

Britain approached Bulgaria: the task should have been easy, for popular opinion was overwhelmingly with Russia and against Turkey. Bulgaria's demands were simple—she wanted Macedonia. Britain offered concessions, but the suspicious Bulgars said: "Show us Serbia's agreement. Let us march in now; otherwise you'll only give us another San Stefano." Britain put the point to Serbia: "Give up the disputed share of Macedonia, so as to bring in Bulgaria. It is a tract of no outstanding importance, since there is now no question of your having Salonika. But, if we win this war, you are to have Croatia and Slovenia—territory incomparably richer—to say nothing of Bosnia and Herzegovina. And in place of Salonika you shall have ample ports in the Adriatic. All this can come about *only* if we win the war. So give up Macedonia to Bulgaria, and make victory certain."

But Serbia declined. Until this time she had repelled Austrian invasions with comparative ease—considered that victory *was*

certain without Bulgaria's aid. She refused to yield a yard of the disputed territory.

Naturally, German and Austrian diplomats were not idle—and their bargaining hand was far stronger than that of the British. Nor had they so many scruples. They were at war with Serbia—could give away her territory with equanimity. They argued with Bulgaria: "Come in on our side. You know how we look at Serbia, the country which started the war. Her territory is to be incorporated into Austria—Serbia will disappear off the map. So you can have your Macedonia. Further, you have aspirations towards Constantinople—you nearly won the city a year ago. But the Russians will take it if they win. Then Bulgaria will become a Russian province. And a victorious Serbia will become Yugoslavia, certainly incorporating Macedonia—maybe overrunning Bulgaria as well."

These were the arguments put to the Bulgarian government which, by the usual corruptive methods, was then under Austrian influence. The dominant sympathy of the peasants was with Russia. The Germans recognized this, and sent emissaries to change Bulgarian opinion. British representatives were too proud and gentlemanly to resort to the use of such improper methods: they continued to argue by the methods of diplomacy with the Bulgarian government. The German political agents used methods which Hitler was later to borrow. They concentrated on one theme, and did not halt at truth: in Macedonia they had a lure even for the most ardent Russophile: the bait was irresistible.

On October 4, 1915, Bulgaria came in on the side of Germany and Austria. The tottering Turkey was propped up by the supplies which could now pass to her: Serbia, smitten by the Bulgars in flank, was rapidly overrun by invaders. An immobile army had to be assembled at Salonika—sarcastically termed by the Germans their "greatest internment camp"—watched by Bulgarian jailers. Is it too much to claim that the Bulgarian decision lengthened the war by a year? Most competent military circles would say *two* years, with their toll of frightful slaughter. And all because of

miserable Macedonia. Britishers *are* vitally concerned in Balkan problems.

With their promised objectives gained, and Macedonia in their hands, the ardour of the Bulgars rapidly cooled. Previous wars had been short: this dragged on, and every peasant longed to return to his farm. The Germans exploited the situation as they do in the present war, taking the maximum of food from Bulgaria: a poor harvest in 1917 intensified the discontent. All through the war there was a strong opposition party, favouring the Allied cause.

President Wilson's Fourteen Points had a wide influence when they permeated Bulgarian valleys and trenches. They promised autonomy and self-determination—just what the Bulgars wanted. If the Macedonians were given self-determination, everybody knew that they would decide to join with Bulgaria. So why should Bulgaria fight on, when she would gain her ends by such admirable means? <sup>1</sup>

## IX

Once again Bulgaria had backed the wrong side. Further fragments of Macedonia were nibbled by Yugoslavia from her attenuated frontiers: she suffered considerable territorial losses to Greece and Roumania—we shall consider these later. Hitler had a lot of hard things to say about the Treaty of Versailles, but this was far more in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Four-

<sup>1</sup> This influence on the morale of the Bulgars was intensified by a strange rumour of unknown origin that their tsar had hired them to Germany and Austria for three years, so that in any case they would be able to go home in September, 1918! This rumour compares in its effects with that of the passage of the Russians through Britain in August, 1914. This fantasy, reported as fact to the Germans by one of their spies, caused them to detail two divisions to guard the Belgian coast against the prospective Russian invasion—at the very moment of the Battle of the Marne. These two divisions might easily have turned the issue of the battle, and with it the course of the war.

Years before the rise of Hitler, I found the German General Staff more than interested in these *accidental* rumours—and their effects. Since then the Germans have used such yarns, freely invented for the purpose, as *deliberate* weapons, sometimes with remarkable results. Nevertheless, the weapon has been known to act like a boomerang.

teen Points than was the Treaty of Neuilly, which ended Bulgaria's gamble.

The beaten country had no friends: the government, striving desperately to alleviate the confusion and misery inherent to defeat, could only accept the situation. Not so I.M.R.O., which was not bound by the judgments of Paris. In the rump of Bulgarian Macedonia bands of desperate men gathered: they called themselves patriots, but others called them brigands. They kept up a



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state of intermittent warfare, and claimed to "rule" their own corner of Bulgaria in the name of the Macedonian people.

They were reinforced by Macedonians expelled from Greece to make room for the Greeks expelled from Turkey in 1922. This forcible exodus at least simplified the basis of the quarrel. The population of Greek Macedonia became 90 per cent Greek. The dispute was now almost exclusively between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

I.M.R.O. dominated the scene. It even levied its own taxes—in addition to the government dues—in its own district. Its head-

quarters at Petritch were a mixture of civil government and field force. The cabinet at Sofia professed itself helpless—was actually overawed by the terrorists. One minister, Tsankoff, replaced the weathercock on his house by a machine-gun! Any minister who opposed I.M.R.O. was speedily assassinated. There was a period when life in Sofia was quite unsafe: innocent passers-by might find themselves between the lines of miniature battles. It was dangerous to go out after dark. No man with unpopular opinions dared to move without armed escort. There were assassins for hire on every hand: \$20 was considered as a reasonable fee for a straightforward murder. Such was the influence of I.M.R.O. that if any of its agents were even caught their release was rapidly arranged.

The policy of Yugoslavia was beneficent in its objective, but abhorrent to fervent Macedonian nationalists: soon it hardened as a result of I.M.R.O. outrages. Its intention was to Serbize the population of Yugoslav Macedonia. Bulgar schools were forbidden, and every form of Bulgar or Macedonian patriotism was ruthlessly suppressed. When first I travelled in this district, it was a crime to be found in possession of a Bulgarian newspaper!

The murder of the Bulgarian peasant leader, Stamboliski, in 1923, brought the conflict into the open. He had attempted to settle the quarrel with Yugoslavia—and I.M.R.O. condemned him. First he was made to dig his own grave: then his ears and nose were cut off, before he was mercifully killed. This was the beginning of a series of atrocities which were to cause the deaths of thousands of people, many of them without active part in the quarrel.

I felt desperately sorry for the wretched inhabitants of Yugoslav Macedonia, or South Serbia, as it had been rechristened. I.M.R.O. komitadji bands would swoop over the frontier in some desperate raid of pillage and murder: if the peasants aided the raiders—and their natural sympathies were often with them—then they could look for trouble when the avenging Yugoslav soldiery arrived. If they refused their aid, then the komitadji were past masters in the arts of torture and murder.

From what I could see, there was little to choose between the two sides. In one village I saw a man who had "talked"; the opposite side had made sure that he would not talk again, for his tongue was slit down the middle. In the same street was a woman who had refused to talk: she bared her shoulder to show me her arm-pit, where a red-hot brand had been thrust. Another man showed me his fingers, where wedges of wood had been driven between the flesh and the nails.

Every atrocity provoked a dozen others, for reprisal is the commonest of instinctive passions. Except that it was far more ferocious, the guerrilla warfare in Macedonia was akin to that in Ireland at the time of the Black and Tans. When I talked to komitadji they protested strongly that they were not murderers—they were patriots: their object, they claimed, was to attract the attention of the chancelleries of Europe to Macedonia. If so, they certainly succeeded! You must not blame them too hardly for the choice of method. Far too often have civilized governments ignored problems peacefully presented, only to capitulate to armed disorder.

The two governments were inevitably involved. The Yugoslavs complained that the Bulgarian government connived at the komitadji raids—that it made no effort to suppress the bands. The Bulgars retorted that if the Yugoslav government had allowed to its minorities the rights to which they were entitled, then the trouble would never have arisen. There was an acute state of tension, akin to the moments preceding war. The Yugoslav frontier was a mass of barbed wire, with machine-gun posts every kilometre.

For ten years the appalling record of slaughter continued. I.M.R.O. was well supplied with money and arms—apart from the "taxes" it levied, it boasted that it received subsidies from Italy, the "historic" enemy of Yugoslavia. But in 1933, there arose a Bulgarian government which was appalled at this warfare between cousins: the influence of King Boris was flung into the scale, in the cause of peace.

The komitadji eased the situation by quarrelling among them-

selves—and they were no more gentle in their internecine feuds than in their guerrilla warfare. There had developed in their ranks two factions: the Federalists, who pursued the original ambition of an autonomous Macedonia, allied in federal unity with Bulgaria and Yugoslavia: and the Supremists, who sought to incorporate Macedonia within Bulgaria, and then to dominate the Balkans. The Supremists had long played an important part in Bulgarian affairs. Now they turned their weapon of terror against their friends: there is no quarrel so fierce as that between brothers.

Taking advantage of the situation, the Bulgarian government exiled the leaders. A new atmosphere developed. King Alexander of Yugoslavia paid a state visit to Sofia which had far-reaching effects in the cause of friendship. Yet a few weeks later King Alexander was dead. His assassination was arranged by Pavelitch and his Ustachi, later installed by Mussolini as rulers of Croatia: but the actual assassin was a Macedonian terrorist. As an example of Balkan paradox, this man, Chernozemski, was a vegetarian because he held it to be cruel to kill animals—but he was a professional assassin with over twenty murders to his “credit”!

The murder of Alexander sounded a warning note in the Balkans. Already there had been preliminary moves towards the cessation of the irregular warfare which embittered Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. So far back as 1923 Stamboliski, the Bulgarian premier, had made amicable approaches to his neighbour—and was promptly murdered by I.M.R.O. Tsankoff, his successor, began to take firm action, ruthlessly repressing all opposition. He was aided by the violent quarrels within I.M.R.O. Some of its members still strove for an independent Macedonia; others for union with Bulgaria—but others were absorbing the idea of a federal Yugoslav state. These latter were especially unpopular with the “patriots.”

There was disagreement, too, about Communist help. This was the period when the Soviets hoped to extend their system to cover the world. The Macedonian leaders, stern realists, were willing to accept Russian help, but not at the expense of Bulgarian sub-



serviency. In the general argument, Alexandrov, the chief of I.M.R.O., was murdered. The government seized the opportunity to remove and repress the wilder elements of the organization. If it had not done so, the enraged Serbs would have marched to end the menace by drastic action. Yet I.M.R.O. was not dead, but only subdued, to re-emerge whenever relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia seemed to be easing.

Yet they did ease. The bulk of the peasants of the Balkans were heartily tired of blood and massacre: their economic difficulties were keen enough without the armed terror which made life so uncertain. Very gradually Macedonia was quietened: Serbian restrictive measures were relaxed.

This, then, is an outline of the position of Macedonia in 1939. The Macedonians, who thought that they were a Slav tribe, very closely akin to the Bulgars, had at last obtained their freedom from the Turks in 1913. (The Macedonians knew nothing of the secret treaty by which the Balkan allies had proposed to divide Macedonia into three parts: they had fought fiercely—as Macedonians.) Because of Bulgaria's attack on her allies, the bulk of the province was assigned to Serbia. The Bulgars marched into it in 1915, and held it until 1918, when the Serbs marched back. Then followed a long period of terror, gradually declining. In the late nineteen-thirties Macedonian outrages were comparatively few: and a continuous process of Serbization was having its effects, especially on the rising generation. Yet, although the atmosphere was easier, no one in the Balkans pretended that the problem of Macedonia was solved.

## X

The foregoing is a bare outline of the political problem of Macedonia. But what of the Macedonians?

Statistics are of little use in approaching the difficulties. Turkish figures are completely unreliable. They lumped together all Moslems as Turks, and were often content to classify all Christians as

Greeks.<sup>1</sup> The core of the argument today is the case of the unhappy Macedonians who from 1918 to 1941 were under Yugoslav rule. They were naturally confused at the sudden change in their circumstances. They had been brought up as Bulgars: now, they were told by the peacemakers at Paris, they were Serbs: the more fervent patriots among them insisted that they were Macedonians.

The Serbs naturally began to develop their new territories. Teachers and priests were sent, to inculcate Serbian ideas. There was a religious difficulty—and we have seen that a man's religion is a vital consideration in a land of ethnic confusion. Most of the Macedonians accepted the control of the Bulgarian Exarchate, and not of the Greek Patriarchate—the Exarchate had been encouraged by the Turks so as to foster division between the subject Christian races. It was interested in education as well as religion, and exercised wide influence over the Macedonian peasants.

If the First World War had not broken out within a year of the Serbian acquisition of Macedonia, then the course of history might have been very different. For the patriotism of peasants is always local: the overwhelming urge of the Macedonians was to obtain freedom from Turkish oppression. This had now been attained: if they now found themselves ruled by Serbs instead of the anticipated Bulgars, at least they were fellow-Slavs. The termination of their names was changed from the Bulgar *-ov* to the Serb *-ovitch*.<sup>2</sup> They even accepted the Serbian priests and teachers. Their consolation was that the Turkish cruelties were now ended, and that they could till their farms in peace.

This was the outlook of many Macedonian peasants: but not of the fervent patriots. Many of these latter emigrated to Bulgaria, where they became very influential. The Macedonian differs in

<sup>1</sup> A Bulgarian estimate of the population of Macedonia in 1912 was:

Slavs	1,179,000	Vlachs	78,000
(including 147,000 Moslems)		Jews	70,000
Turks	498,000	Gypsies	55,000
Greeks	225,000	Miscellaneous	20,000
Albanians	125,000		

These figures were radically altered by the withdrawal of the Turks, and by Greek immigration into Southern Macedonia.

<sup>2</sup> Literally "son of": another similar Slav termination is *-sky*.

his mental make-up from the Bulgarian: he is smarter, less scrupulous, freer in words, more dynamic in action.

It so often happens in history that an organization founded for highly commendable purposes deteriorates into gangster methods. I.M.R.O. had done valuable work in the years of struggle against the Turks: now, after 1918, it became little more than a Bulgarian expansionist weapon. But peasants do not forget easily, or appreciate change: many Macedonians looked upon the new I.M.R.O. with the same affection that they had given to the old, not appreciating that its basis had altered.

The expansion of Serbia into Yugoslavia—the Land of the South Slavs—raised new ideas and hopes. Were not Bulgars and Macedonians also South Slavs? The idea was rigidly repressed by I.M.R.O. Supremists—and by the Bulgarians: it would have implied Serbian influence across the Balkans rather than Bulgar. One of its leading opponents was King Boris: an extended Land of South Slavs could only have one king; and he, a German, would stand a poor chance against the native ruling house in Belgrade. Yet in spite of all opposition the idea took firm root in Macedonia. There I heard men discussing a federal Yugoslavia, whose constituent provinces should include Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bulgaria—and Macedonia. We must consider this suggestion at a later stage.

There is no perfect ethnic map of the Balkans: each one varies in its frontiers according to the bias of the man who draws it. For that matter, there never could be a perfect ethnic map of this disputed area. In a village near Skoplje I met two brothers: one called himself a Bulgar, the other a Serb!

Yet I found some comfort even in this confusion. I talked to the children of one of these men.

"And are you a Bulgar or a Serb?" I asked his son.

"Neither. I am a Yugoslav," he replied.

A grand answer: he was a South Slav.

"And you?" I turned to the man's daughter.

"I am a Yugoslav too," she said, "if you include Bulgaria as well."

The extraordinary feature of the Macedonian problem is this:

Serbs and Bulgars have shouted their claims, terrorists have sought to impose their ideas by force, *but nobody has ever asked the Macedonian peasants what they themselves would like to do.* Here is an obvious lead when the question re-emerges, as it will certainly do in the moment of victory—or even earlier.

## XI

It is now necessary to retrace our steps somewhat, in order to get a clear view of Bulgarian-Roumanian relations up to the outbreak of the present war. As usual, they were hinged on a disputed province. Many of my readers will not have heard of the Dobrudja, and could scarcely be blamed for that. Yet for the last fifty years it has exercised a surprising influence on Balkan affairs: and, thereby, on the peace of Europe.

The Dobrudja is a province of South-east Roumania, between the Danube and the Black Sea. It is not distinguished physically—there are some ranges of low hills, great swamps bordering the Danube, and waterless plains in the interior—the lack of wells for drinking water is its greatest disadvantage. It is very fertile, however; it can support a considerable peasant population and can even supply considerable quantities of grain for export. Its history is typical of the Balkan medley. The Greeks colonized it; Roman and Byzantine emperors ruled it in turn; but in the seventh century the invading Bulgars settled there, intermarrying with the local population. For four hundred years it was part of the Bulgarian Empire; then, after a short period under independent Wallachian princes, it was incorporated in the Turkish domains, and remained so for five hundred years.

During this period it was considered as part of submerged Bulgaria. Nevertheless, it should be explained that at no time was it ethnically entirely Bulgar—there was always present a considerable minority of Petchenegs and Cumans (both tribes of Turkish origin) and Wallachians (now known as Roumanians). Under the Turkish Empire, naturally, still larger numbers of Turks settled in Dobrudja.

For five hundred years the Dobrudja, like Bulgaria, was no

more than a name—a half-forgotten name at that. But in the Russian-Turkish War of 1877 the Roumanians were of considerable assistance to the Russians. They allowed Russian armies to march across their territory; and, when the Turkish resistance proved stronger than was anticipated, they supplied considerable forces, and fought with great gallantry at Plevna. As a reward, Roumania was given Southern Bessarabia by the Russians after the Treaty of San Stefano—that unratiſed document which appears ubiquitously throughout the Balkan story.



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The Roumanians were quite happy at the cession of Southern Bessarabia, which contained a large Roumanian element. But the Powers at Berlin cancelled the award freely granted by Russia. They agreed that Roumania should have territorial compensation, however: so she had to give up Southern Bessarabia, which she wanted, and was given Northern Dobruja, which she did not want! Small wonder that the ways of Victorian diplomacy confused the Balkan peasants.

At that time (1878) Roumanians formed only a small minority in Northern Dobrudja. As thousands of Turkish families left the province, however, Roumanians settled in their place, and by 1912 the district had a Roumanian majority. For the same period Southern Dobrudja was part of the newly freed Bulgaria.

When Bulgaria turned on her Balkan allies, in 1913, Roumania seized the moment to strike. Ambition, once whetted, is never satiated. The state which in 1878 did not particularly want half of Dobrudja now demanded the whole: the beaten Bulgarians had to agree.

In 1914, therefore, Southern Dobrudja was a parallel case to Macedonia. Indeed, its loss was even more irritating to the Bulgars. Despite all their sentimental aspirations, they had never held Macedonia, while Southern Dobrudja had been Bulgarian territory since 1878. We argued with Roumania: "When we have won, you are to have Transylvania. Make certain of victory by giving up Southern Dobrudja." But those were land-grabbing days: the reborn Balkan states had to pass through the same processes as had disfigured Western Europe centuries earlier. Roumania refused to give up anything. She entered the war on our side: the Russians failed to provide the promised support, and Roumania was beaten.

Now the whole of the Dobrudja was stripped from her territory. Germany and Austria, however, recognized that there was now a considerable ethnic difference between Northern and Southern Dobrudja. The northern half had been Roumanian for nearly fifty years, and had been so colonized that there was now a Roumanian majority. The Central Powers, therefore, reserved Northern Dobrudja temporarily under their own rule until the map of Europe should be finally redrawn, when its fate should be settled. Southern Dobrudja, however, was immediately handed over (1916) to Bulgaria, whose ethnic and historic claims were indisputable—the half-province had been Roumanian only since 1913.

Bulgarian aspirations were satisfied. Even at this stage we could

have withdrawn Bulgaria from the war by promising that she should hold what she held. She had done a lot of damage, out of all proportion to the size of her army. She had played a big part in the defeats of Serbia and Roumania, bitter blows to the Allied cause. She had helped to prop up Turkey—and had thereby denied Allied help to Russia. The obscure province of Dobrudja, with the equally insignificant Macedonia, certainly prolonged the war by a year—or more. Quite apart from questions of moral right, a little more practical interest in Balkan affairs would have paid us handsome dividends.

In the moment of victory, Southern Dobrudja was naturally restored to Roumania. The Bulgars, from Fascists to Communists, never pretended to accept the situation. There was no I.M.R.O. in Dobrudja: indeed, the first Bulgarian revisionary steps were mild enough, by Balkan standards. The Roumanians, on the other hand, were nervous—and this, in the Balkans, means terror.

When they occupied Southern Dobrudja in 1913, the Roumanians formed only a small proportion of the population—the Bulgars held an easy majority, followed by the Turks. Confirmed in their position in 1919, the victors decided to make the province Roumanian. Their methods were Balkan.

Bulgar schools were closed: newspapers and societies suppressed. Bulgar peasants were not allowed to vote—though this was not an especial hardship in the Balkans, where elections were freely “rigged” however the actual votes were cast.

The Roumanian settlers were of two classes. When Greece received from Turkey her million Greeks, room had to be found for them. Among others, Greek Macedonia housed over 100,000 Vlachs, shepherd peasants of Roumanian race, who were promptly returned to their own country. The Roumanian government decided, quite legitimately, to plant these men in the Dobrudja. The other settlers were not always so well chosen: hardy types were judged necessary to hold the dangerous corners of this outpost of Roumania.

Let us be quite clear: although there was no I.M.R.O. in Dobrudja, Bulgarian opposition was fierce and intense: the local

peasant is tougher than his brother in the home country, and just as devoted to his plot of land. But he was disarmed: and, with the Macedonian quarrel always before its eyes, the Bulgarian government could not afford to involve itself in hostile relations with Roumania. Temporarily—but only temporarily—the Bulgars of Southern Dobrudja had to be left to shift for themselves.

I never knew such an unhappy land as this. I recall my first journey across Southern Dobrudja—I did not see a man smile. There was an atmosphere of terror. The Bulgar had no rights. In one cottage, I found the bodies of two men, murdered and horribly mutilated. Indignant, I sought out the local chief of police and asked what action he was taking.

"None," he replied. "They're only Bulgars."

Yet the action which aroused the fiercest resentment was the seizure of Bulgarian land: when you take a peasant's land, you take his heart. Nor were methods of procedure especially diplomatic. Armed police would escort a Roumanian settler to a Bulgarian peasant farm.

"You will give up half your land to this Roumanian," they would say. "And, until he can build a house of his own, he will have half of yours."

As many of the houses consisted of one-roomed cottages, the resultant situation may be imagined: two families glaring sullenly over the hearth. Further, the size of peasant holdings was already small. To cut them in half meant that a livelihood was impossible. This was the dominant idea of the scheme—to induce the Bulgars to abandon the struggle and to emigrate to Bulgaria.

On every hand I heard accounts of atrocity and despair. Even with the necessary allowance for exaggeration, the situation was appalling. In casual visits I saw for myself quite enough to induce keen anxiety.

There was one unhappy period of six months when over two hundred Bulgars of this region lost their lives. At this time I would have classed the Dobrudja as the site of the fuse for the European powder-house. For these murders were terribly dangerous. Each was fully reported in the Bulgarian press—and it



can be taken for granted that atrocities were always embellished in the telling. A dozen times patriotic societies of Bulgars were on the point of raiding the province—were forcibly restrained by their own government. I would never have been surprised at a Bulgar outbreak in the Dobrudja with support from Bulgaria. Then war would have been inevitable. The death of one man has started off a war before now.

It is not my intention to cast Roumania as the villain of the piece. Had the positions of Roumania and Bulgaria been reversed, the story would probably have been the same—or worse. Despite their great advance during the last generation, Balkan codes of conduct do not yet approximate to Western standards: this particularly applies to political methods.

Economically, the loss of Southern Dobrudja hit Bulgaria hard. Roumania was large and potentially rich; Bulgaria was small and poor. The surplus grain of Dobrudja merely added to Roumania's already large surplus for export; Bulgaria had no surplus at all.

While Southern Dobrudja formed only 2 per cent of the area of Roumania, it was 10 per cent of the area of Bulgaria. Its agricultural economy was richer. In Southern Dobrudja alone the agricultural machinery exceeded a quarter of the entire total for Bulgaria. This means a lot in a land where many peasants still use the wooden plough, the hand sickle, and the winnowing floor, and their ambition is the possession of modern machinery. In the Balkans, questions of land and grain take the place of tariffs and means tests as subjects for political discussion: and tempers are as primitive as arguments.

Although the Bulgars never abandoned their claims, the atmosphere eased after 1935. The German seizure of Czechoslovakia revived dormant ambitions: the Little Entente was dead, and Roumania was almost isolated. It was already obvious that Russia regarded Roumania with no friendly eyes. There were demonstrations in Bulgaria: frontier incidents were a daily commonplace.

We have halted our consideration of the Macedonian problem at 1939. In the case of the Dobrudja, however, we can carry on.

The first problem has been aggravated by the course of the war, the second solved.

In spite of the fiery enthusiasm of its people, the official Bulgarian attitude in the early days of the war was correct enough. Thanks largely to the steadying influence of Turkey, Bulgaria agreed to postpone the issue of the Dobrudja until the end of the war—there was great anxiety to avoid the spread of hostilities to the Balkans. It was made plain that a claim *would* be preferred when the war ended; indeed, it is now known that King Carol of Roumania had promised King Boris of Bulgaria the cession of the province once hostilities were over. The Bulgars restrained their impatience.

The situation was changed by the Russian seizure of Bessarabia and the subsequent Hungarian demand for Transylvania. It was scarcely human to expect Bulgaria to stand by patiently while all other claimants satisfied themselves at Roumania's expense. Bulgaria's own claims were promptly revived and presented. If she waited too long, there might be no Roumania left: or, at least, no Dobrudja, for Russia might not halt on the left bank of the Danube.

Roumania was helpless. She turned in despair to her newly appointed Axis "protectors," but they could only advise her to agree to a settlement with Bulgaria. Then the British government stated that it would regard favourably an amicable settlement of the Dobrudja question—which was a diplomatic way of stating that it backed the Bulgarian case. *If this statement had been made ten years earlier, Bulgaria might have been satisfied, the Balkan Pact might have become complete, and the war would certainly have taken a very different course.*<sup>1</sup> It is idle to allot all the blame to pre-war governments of Britain for their indifference to Balkan affairs: they only reflected the general attitude of the country. Any Prime Minister who had suggested intervention in Balkan

<sup>1</sup> The British government did actually make an attempt to solve the Dobrudja problem in 1939, prior to giving its guarantee to Roumania. The attempt failed, since Roumania believed that a cession would be interpreted as a sign of weakness by other countries which had claims on her territory: this attitude was not unreasonable.

quarrels would have been violently denounced, and if his intervention had led to another penny on the income tax, he would have been flung from office. Today the country has to pay a bitter price for that neglect.

On August 21, 1940, agreement was reached between Roumania and Bulgaria. The Southern Dobrudja was ceded immediately to Bulgaria, and arrangements were made for exchanges of population—Bulgars from Northern Dobrudja exchanging farms with Roumanians in the south. The occupation was carried out without serious incident.

Indeed, the whole episode was a credit to both parties. The Bulgars in their hour of triumph showed a wise restraint. Had they demanded the whole of the Dobrudja, the Roumanians could scarcely have resisted, for it is possible that the Bulgar claim would have been supported by Russia—which would then have had a common frontier with Bulgaria near the mouth of the Danube. The moderation of the Bulgars must always be recalled to their credit. It is true that some of the Bulgarian leaders did not want a common frontier with Russia: they suspected that the activities of the Comintern found a receptive response in Bulgaria.

(Actually, the Bulgarian claim to Northern Dobrudja today is but weakly founded. The territory may have housed a majority of Bulgars in 1878, but such is no longer the case. The Bulgarian claim, in fact, is based on a figure of 100,000 Bulgars out of a total population of 300,000. The Roumanians, needless to say, do not agree with the Bulgar figure, and say that the number of Bulgars is less than 50,000. In any case, the Bulgars are today in a minority—for once we can agree on that.)

(A further complication is introduced by the fact that the only railway communication between Roumania and the Black Sea lies through the Northern Dobrudja. With this railway in foreign hands, a considerable portion of Roumanian trade might be paralysed—particularly in winter, when the Danube is frozen.)

Both sides appear to have accepted the settlement loyally. While Roumania makes no secret of the fact that her aims include the recovery of Bessarabia and Transylvania, there is every indication that the problem of the Dobrudja is considered as settled.

M. Tilea, President of the Free Roumanians, met in London in 1941 M. Kosta Teodorov, leader of Free Bulgaria. They agreed on the principle of the cession of Southern Dobrudja, and no one is likely to quarrel with it.

This is a decision we can heartily endorse: indeed, it may prove a useful precedent for parallel cases. Nevertheless, it does not follow automatically that it will be adopted in the confusion which may arise after the end of hostilities: the hour of victory or defeat is less often noted for its reason than for its passion. No one can foresee the type of government likely to be in power in Bucarest and Sofia when the Axis breaks: each capital contains its quota of irredentists. But the solution of the Dobrudja is essentially in accord with the terms of the Atlantic Charter, which we have adopted as the basis of the new world, and we shall be in a position to enforce its common sense on people who place local animosities higher than the peace of Europe.

## XII

Balkan squabbles are like dormant volcanoes. They erupt fiercely: then subside so peacefully that casual observers imagine that they are extinct. Suddenly there arises some provocation, which may or may not be concerned with the original fury, and the volcano is in eruption again.

We have seen that after the Balkan wars of 1912-13, Bulgaria lost most of her gains because of her treacherous attack on her allies. One only was she allowed to keep—a corridor of territory through Thrace to the port of Dedeagatch. (At an earlier stage in the campaign, before the Bulgar attack, Greece had offered the much better port of Kavalla: this was declined—Bulgaria wanted Salonika.) After the World War, the territory was claimed by and awarded to Greece. Like most Balkan borderlands, it had a mixed population—Greeks, Turks, and Bulgars. The latter numbered only 69,000 out of 213,000, and on ethnic grounds the Greek claim could not be denied.

(The Bulgars claimed a figure of 81,000, but this included officials and troops not indigenous to the region. In fairness it should

be pointed out that the population included 70,000 Turks, who were later replaced by Greeks under the arrangements for exchange of population. Today the Greeks of Eastern Thrace outnumber the Bulgars by three to one.)

Economically the Bulgars were hit nationally and locally: nationally, by the loss of their only port on the Aegean; locally, because the shepherds of the Rhodope Mountains had for many centuries driven their flocks down to the Thracian plains for winter pasturage. Now this was prevented by a closed frontier.

The Treaty of Neuilly undertook to ensure the economic outlet of Bulgaria to the Aegean Sea. Irredentists argued that this implied territorial access to the sea: the men who drew up the treaty said that it did not. Instead, they proceeded to carry out their intentions. By the Thracian Treaty of August 10, 1920, Bulgaria was allotted a free zone in the port of Dedeagatch, and the full use of the connecting railway. The treaty was not ratified by Bulgaria.

The Greeks were anxious to be conciliatory, but the Balkan atmosphere was one of suspicion and opportunism. First Bulgaria asked for a more convenient port four miles west of Dedeagatch, which had but a poor natural harbour. The Greeks agreed. The Bulgars then claimed that such a port would be useless unless it were under Bulgarian control: the Greeks agreed. The Bulgars next demanded control of the railway: the Greeks agreed. Having gained all the essentials, the Bulgars now demanded a territorial corridor.

The Greeks, with Allied approval, made Bulgaria an alternative offer—a free zone in Salonika, a port far superior to Dedeagatch in every way. When the Bulgars refused, it became apparent that their objective was not the economic outlet promised by the Treaty of Neuilly, but the recovery of territory.

This ought not to have been a serious problem: with no strong ethnic claim, all Bulgaria's reasonable demands could and would have been met by special facilities in Greek ports. Nor, it should be emphasized, did the loss of Eastern Thrace rankle sentimentally as did the cession of Southern Dobrudja and Macedonia.

Here was no historic territory—the Thracian corridor was under Bulgarian control for no more than five years, from 1913 to 1918! But for the German attack on Greece in 1941, it was unlikely to disturb the peace of Europe.

As in the case of Macedonia, however, the rapid German victories aroused dormant passions. Bulgarian armies occupied Eastern Thrace from the Maritza to the Struma—far beyond the original claims. The fundamental control was of course German, but Bulgarian troops could be usefully employed on communications and other preparations for an eventual attack on Turkey, while the Bulgarian government exercised a shadowy and uneasy authority over the reoccupied region. The situation fitted admirably into the German plan—to get the largest possible number of countries and people dependent on a German victory.

### XIII

It is not necessary to follow in detail the political maze of Bulgaria in the inter-war years. The scene was dominated by the Macedonian problem: the outrages of I.M.R.O. were not confined to their own province, but extended over the whole of Bulgaria, almost unchecked.

Nor was the situation helped by the legacy of political bribery from the days of Turkish misrule. The principal duty of a politician was to enrich himself during his period of office, and to avenge himself on his enemies. Of ninety-six cabinet ministers in Bulgaria from 1878 to 1926, exactly one-half were condemned for misappropriation of public funds! But most of them were amnestied by the Tsar—which was only fair, for their accusers were usually as guilty as the accused.

In the immediate post-war years one sturdy figure stood out above his contemporaries: Stamboliski, the peasant leader. His methods were Balkan: when the elections went against him, he simply invalidated blocks of votes. But in his aims he was sincere and far-sighted: he favoured a federal Yugoslavia from the Adriatic to the Black Sea—was willing to cede the Petritch province

to an autonomous Macedonia. For this he was condemned by the I.M.R.O. Supremists, who planned a Greater Bulgaria, not a Yugoslav Federation. They were supported by Italy, who wished to keep the Balkan states divided so as to enlarge her own interests.

One of Stamboliski's measures attracted wide attention. The Bulgarian army was reduced by the Treaty of Neuilly to 10,000 men. The peasant leader was no militarist, but believed that the years of army discipline were valuable to the moulding of Bulgarian character. Thus he instituted the Compulsory Labour Corps, to precede or to substitute for military service. I saw these *troudovaks* in action and was favourably impressed. They worked on public enterprises—roads and railways—in communal fashion: the spirit of the men and the atmosphere in the camps were admirable. It is helpful when a young man is taught that it is part of his duty to work for nothing in the common cause. Later Hitler adopted this compulsory labour corps idea, and distorted it. The scheme is not new, of course—William James argued years ago in favour of "years of communal service." We may find them integrated in our own national life.

(Although Stamboliski was no militant, he recognized Bulgaria's helplessness in the midst of suspicious neighbours. Forbidden all but a tiny army, he adopted subterfuges. I rode a bicycle across Bulgaria—a land where the bicycle is little used—the bad roads explain this. When I enquired if Bulgarian cyclists were organized, I received an affirmative answer—but found that the Cyclists' Association was a private military organization. There was also a Hunters' Association, with 40,000 members in green uniforms—and rifle ranges in every town! When we disarm Germany, we shall have to watch keenly for similar evasions.)

After the murder of Stamboliski by I.M.R.O., the internal situation in Bulgaria became more chaotic. As if the Macedonian outrages were insufficient, the Communists entered the lists, using similar methods. Actually, they were blamed for many actions for which they were not responsible, after the fashion of the times. Nor were they all Communists politically: some were

inheritors of the strong affection for Russia derived from the days of liberation.

In 1925 a time bomb exploded in Sofia Cathedral, killing 128 people and injuring hundreds. The Communists were held responsible and their party declared illegal: but the government of the day seized the opportunity to get rid of all its leading opponents, whether Communists or not. The situation was aggravated by border squabbles: Greeks had invaded the Petritch province: Bulgarian enthusiasts had raided Roumanian Dobrudja: and of course the I.M.R.O. raids on Yugoslav Macedonia were continuous. Bulgaria's neighbours began to get very uneasy, and their tempers hardened.

All this time Bulgaria's foreign policy was quite clear: not even the humblest peasant pretended to accept his country's frontiers as final, but burned with resentment. The many successive governments all agreed on this, and looked for friends. To whom should they turn? Their neighbours were backed by France and Britain: Russia was still in the throes of internal reconstruction: Germany, apparently uninterested. There was only one possible protector—Italy. Here was a country which also believed that it had been cheated by the peace treaties; and which was jealous of the rise of Yugoslavia.

The alliance was natural enough: no other was possible. King Boris married an Italian princess: Italian loans helped the long-delayed development of Bulgaria: and Italian agents began their subtle intervention in Bulgarian affairs.

Nevertheless, the Italians could not dominate Bulgarian minds, and ideas of kinship. When, in 1929, King Alexander of Yugoslavia became dictator of his country, he showed his anxiety for better relations with his neighbour. Bulgarian governments hesitated, but the opinion of the people was almost solid. Eventually British influence played a minor but important part. King Boris, on a visit to London in 1933, was persuaded to halt at Belgrade for a few hours on his return journey. As a result, Alexander made a formal visit to Sofia, and received a very warm welcome. But such a possibility of Yugoslav union was anathema to the



Macedonian Supremists, and they promptly helped in the assassination of Alexander: their partners were the Italian-backed Croatian Ustachi. I.M.R.O. was now operating under greater difficulties—nearly all Bulgarian parties were tired of the continuous succession of murders—but was maintained by Italian subsidies: Mussolini knew quite well it was easier to dominate a divided state.

But by this time the Nazis were in control of Germany. The Reich had always been economically interested in the Balkans—a very natural interest, as a glance at the map will show. Now its rulers determined to use economic weapons for political ends.

It is impossible to blame Bulgaria—or, for that matter, the other Balkan countries—for acquiescence in the scheme. The world slump had hit the country hard: her exports were never large, and now nobody seemed able or willing to buy them. At such a moment Germany offered to take her entire surplus—on special terms, it is true. A desperate man cannot haggle: a bad bargain is better than no bargain at all. By 1939 over 67 per cent of Bulgaria's exports was going to Germany: 65 per cent of her imports came from that country. (The figures for Britain were 3.1 per cent and 2.8 per cent respectively!) At the time it was sneeringly claimed in some sections of the British press that Germany sent only aspirins and mouth-organs. This was quite untrue, and helped to hide the nature of the German menace. What the Nazis did do, however, was to build up a large debt in Bulgaria, since their deliveries of goods were always behind. By 1939, therefore, Germany owed Bulgaria very large sums. This was part of the plan. If Germany were defeated, then Bulgaria would not get her money, and would be virtually bankrupt. Almost by force Bulgaria's future was dependent on a German victory.

In the meantime the Balkan situation became easier. The *rapprochement* between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria had wide effects: I.M.R.O. was declared illegal—though it was not so easily suppressed. Italy had now revised her former policy, and affected friendship to Yugoslavia as well as to Bulgaria. In 1937, therefore,

a pact of friendship between the two neighbours was signed. Its phrases were flamboyant, but its intent was hailed by the masses in both lands. Keen eyes looked forward to a realization of a closer friendship.

(The Queen of Bulgaria spoiled one widely held idea. She had three daughters and no son: a marriage between the young King Peter of Yugoslavia and one of the Bulgar princesses would have solved the dynastic problem. But in 1937 a prince, Simeon, was born, to upset what might have been a happy arrangement.)

The hand of the Nazis was seen in Bulgarian internal affairs. All opponents were ruthlessly suppressed as "Communists." Had Bulgarian methods been translated to Britain, Mr. Chamberlain would have certainly eliminated so powerful a critic as Mr. Churchill as a "Communist." In the midst of a procession of Prime Ministers, King Boris was almost a dictator. His constitutional powers were very wide, approximating to those of a Kaiser of Germany rather than to those of a King of England. He made many mistakes: his methods in dealing with opponents were very Balkan: but he has been blamed for events quite beyond his control. It is difficult to see how he could have kept Bulgaria out of the Axis camp, even had he so wished. Not until the moment of danger approached was anybody else interested in Bulgaria. Indeed, when Boris visited Britain in 1938, Mr. Chamberlain was only able to spare him twenty minutes!

No one could envy Boris his task. He took over the wobbly throne of a bankrupt state, defeated in a disastrous series of wars—for which his father bore a major share of the blame. His first Prime Ministers, powerful personalities like Stamboliski, treated him as a nonentity, but in the confusion of Balkan politics he was able to increase his influence. Neither left nor right wing governments were able to cope with the acute series of internal crises, to say nothing of satisfying popular territorial aspirations, and in 1934 a new element appeared on the political scene. This was *Zveno*, a nationalist organization headed by Colonel Veltchev, determined to clean up Bulgarian politics.

Veltchev might have made progress, but no Bulgarian politi-

cian ever succeeded in securing that invaluable ally, time. *Zveno* forced the King to give it dictatorial powers, but when it moved towards agreement with Yugoslavia it was violently opposed by another military faction. Veltchev was sentenced to death, following the normal routine, but his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. If he is still alive we shall probably hear of him again.

His successors adopted a remarkable expedient. They declared for a parliamentary government, but without political parties! A candidate might be a Liberal or a Communist, but he could only stand as an individual, not as a representative of his party. The inevitable result was confusion—the average number of candidates for each constituency was ten! It also offered unique opportunities for illicit political bargains—and to foreign powers who delighted to fish in very troubled waters.

After that time (1935) the power of Boris was greatly increased. He controlled Bulgarian foreign policy. It is, of course, fashionable to describe him as pro-German: really he was pro-Bulgarian—and, quite naturally, pro-Boris: a king who believes in his mission and his dynasty wishes them to survive. In 1940 he was credited with the following *mot*: "My generals are pro-German, my diplomats are pro-British, my queen is pro-Italian, my people are pro-Russian. I am the only neutral in Bulgaria." It is very seldom that the ruler of a little country has any affection for the ruler of a big country—he only fears him. Boris feared both Stalin and Hitler, for different but parallel reasons.

Yet, when the crisis approached, he had little choice. For the first months of the war he tried loyally to keep the war away from the Balkans. The collapse of France, the Russian occupation of Bessarabia, and the subsequent scramble for Roumanian territory (considered in the following chapter) altered the atmosphere completely. The Germans were winning the war: Britain was isolated, fighting with her back to the wall: Italy had joined in the conflict: Russia stood aloof, and there was no sign of American intervention. When faced with a demand for co-operation with victorious Germany, what could Boris do? His descrip-

tion of himself as a caterpillar under the foot of an elephant was accurate enough. The only alternative was reliance on Britain—which had never shown the slightest interest in the country. Boris decided that he must oblige his best customer—if he did not, Bulgaria would certainly be overrun within a few hours. So he agreed that German air and military bases should be established in Bulgaria—but not that Bulgarian troops should take part in the fighting. Italian invitations to join in the attack on Greece and to share the spoils were firmly declined. Nor were the German occupiers welcomed by the Bulgars. According to the Sofia government, they came to prevent the spread of the war to the Balkans. Russia, however, sternly pointed out the obvious fact that the exact opposite was the truth, and most of the Bulgarian peasants agreed.

But once a dam is broken down, the flow of the torrent cannot be halted or even controlled. The rapid German conquests of Greece and Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941 roused nationalistic passions. The "San Stefano frontiers" were again the topic of the day. Hitler followed his usual policy of getting all his friends thoroughly involved, so as to make their future dependent upon a German victory. First Bulgarian troops were drafted to garrison the conquered districts of Thrace and Macedonia. Later Hitler allocated them to his ally, and they were formally annexed.

There was great joy in Bulgaria—among the peasants, let it be said, as well as among nationalist politicians. A large share of the San Stefano territory had been regained—and without the shedding of Bulgarian blood.

Again the atmosphere changed with the German attack on Russia. We have seen that there is a great affection in Bulgaria for the Russians, whatever their form of government: the Russians were the "Liberators." Hundreds of thousands of peasants, sturdy individualists and constitutionally opposed to the Communist creed, looked with great distaste on their partnership with the German aggressors. Like Boris, they had never been pro-German: they were pro-Bulgarian, but any foreign sympathy they had went to Russia.

The entry of America into the war also had wide effects. There are tens of thousands of Bulgars in the United States, and thousands more have returned to their own country: all spread stories of the vast wealth and industrial power of the great republic. They were reinforced by the British victories in North Africa. It was a Balkan statesman who first coined the famous phrase that "in every war Britain always wins one battle—the last." The long-memoried Bulgars recalled this, and pondered.

Boris was no fool. The Russian summer victories of 1943 had caught the imagination of his people: the British and American landings in Sicily prompted him to the realization that the tide of war had definitely turned. Weeks *before* the fall of Mussolini Boris summoned a politician of moderate views, Kiossewanov, and asked him to form a government which would change the line of Bulgaria's foreign policy. Kiossewanov declined—he said that it was now too late.

The Germans are well informed about incidents such as this. In August, 1943, Boris was summoned to see Hitler. Concerned about the impending collapse of Italy, the Germans were especially anxious to make firmer their grip on the Balkans. More co-operation was necessary. Bulgarian troops must replace the lost Italian divisions.

We can presume that Boris refused — even tried to withdraw from his commitments: for a week later he was dead. It was given out that he had died from heart failure: it is a very common cause of death! When I last saw King Boris in 1938 I would willingly have taken an insurance on his life. Across the Balkans spread stories declaring that he was murdered by agents in German employ — poison is the weapon supposed to have been employed.

So perished Boris. His death was hailed in some quarters with satisfaction: this was how Hitler's satellite jackals should end. Boris the engineer was forgotten: the quiet family man who was never involved in amorous scandals: the ordinary fellow who moved about among his people more freely than any ruler in Europe—whose personal popularity was sincere, not based on adulation: in place of these, we get a distorted picture of some

despicable, boot-licking, wicked schemer. Boris did what he thought was best for his country in appallingly difficult circumstances. He made many mistakes: so did we. Fate gave us a chance to recover from ours: Hitler gave him none.

## XIV

The new King of Bulgaria, Simeon, was six years old. Even his enemies must have felt sorry for the child who inherited such a troubled legacy.

A regency was established: principal figure was Boris' last Prime Minister, Professor Filov. The new government, under M. Bozelov, is largely composed of Civil Servants and professional men—not well known politicians. There may be unusual significance in this. It was certainly significant that the chief candidate for the premiership, the pro-German Grabowski, was not even included in the Cabinet. No election was held: even under Balkan electoral conditions, it was certain that the government would be overthrown, for Bulgarian apprehensions were thoroughly aroused. We have seen that Italian influence in Bulgaria has been considerable: the collapse of Italy had violent repercussions—but it did not solve the problem of how Bulgaria could get out of the war. Nevertheless, the German control in Sofia is very firm: the real Prime Minister is not M. Bozelov, but Herr Beckerke. Any government which did not play the German game would be immediately overthrown.

However, we can now proceed to summarize the Bulgarian situation as the spring of 1944 approached.

(a) The last Balkan state, except Albania, to recover her freedom from the Turks (1878), Bulgaria was late in the scramble for territory, considerable areas predominantly Bulgar in population being under the rule of Serbs, Roumanians, and Greeks. Bulgarian nationalist aspirations were fostered by the Treaty of San Stefano, by which Turkey under Russian dictation created a Greater Bulgaria. This treaty was torn up by the Great Powers, and that of Berlin substituted. This put a fragmentary Bulgaria

on the map, and laid the foundations of many of the problems of today. In particular, it led to the inclusion of Bulgaria among our enemies in two world wars, and to most of the misery Bulgaria has had to endure during the last thirty years.

(b) Bulgaria is overwhelmingly a peasant country, but has not yet succeeded in developing an equitable system of government. The peasant problems, especially economic problems, will be considered separately, for they are common to all Balkan countries.

(c) Despite his local outlook, the Bulgar is fiercely nationalistic, and has suffered much for his faith. He is not content to live under foreign rule, however beneficent it may be. His experience of foreigners has not been very happy.

(d) Of all the nationalistic problems which confront Bulgaria, the most thorny is that of Macedonia. Here Bulgarian opinion is united and very determined: the only subject of argument is whether Macedonia should be incorporated within Bulgaria, or should be federated as a separate state. After the defeat of Yugoslavia in 1941, the province *was* incorporated within Bulgaria, and revived the hopes even of those who had begun to despair. Its loss would be a terrible blow to Bulgaria. At the same time, we have seen that there are at least three sides to this complicated quarrel, and the most important of all—the wish of the Macedonians themselves—has been least considered. For that matter, the reception of the Bulgarian army in Macedonia was not quite as enthusiastic as had been anticipated! Again, we shall encounter this problem later, when we turn to the question of Balkan federation.

(e) One vexing grievance can be claimed as removed, and the Roumanian cession of the Southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria should be permanent.

(f) The Bulgarian occupation of Thrace is *not* permanent. The district is largely Greek in character, and in an atmosphere of common sense it would be simple to arrange economic rights for Bulgaria through Greek ports.

(g) Bulgaria's entry into the war was inevitable. Germany

took every step to push her in, and Britain took no steps to keep her out. The German economic grip on the country, the fervour of revisionist ideas, the atmosphere of frustration, and the philosophy of despair, all helped to drive Bulgaria along a path to which we offered no reasonable alternative.

(b) At the same time, the Bulgarian army has not been engaged in battle, but only for police duties as an army of occupation. The word "police" must be widely interpreted in a Balkan sense. It has covered brutal repressive measures when opposition was encountered. This will not make the path of Balkan friendship any easier. Three times in the last thirty years the Bulgars have attacked the Serbs. In such cases men think of effects rather than causes, and it is not human to expect the Serbs to forget lightly: nor will the Greeks.

(i) Despite the peasant preponderance, the weakness of peasant organization left most of the power in the hands of a professional political class. Their wranglings and squabbles paved the way to a royal-military dictatorship. Yet even dictatorships depend largely on public opinion—at least, they cannot defy it too sharply. No king or dictator could have led Bulgaria into war unless the mass of peasants was behind him. This certainly applied to the "recovery" of territory in Macedonia, Southern Dobrudja, and Thrace, which nearly every Bulgarian considers as his natural and national right.

(j) On the other hand, no king or dictator could ever induce the Bulgarian peasants to fight against Russia. The point has nothing to do with political ideology. There is a strong Communist element in Bulgaria (if by this time it has not been "eliminated"). It does not consist to any great extent of peasants, who are conservative individualists, but of "unemployed intellectuals."<sup>1</sup> By itself, the Communist section would not be of overwhelming importance. But every Bulgar has a deep sentimental affection for Russia, the country which freed him from

<sup>1</sup> A good sample was Dimitroff, the Bulgarian Communist who defied Göring so magnificently and skilfully in the Reichstag fire trial. Later he became secretary of the Comintern.



the Turks. That affection is for *Russia*, whether the rulers be tsars or Stalins. Even the Bulgarian dictators resisted the sternest German pressure to supply divisions for the Russian war. They were wise: sturdy fighters as they are, the Bulgars would certainly have gone over to the Russian side.

(*k*) Many Bulgarian leaders—among the peasant groups as well as the fascist—are nervous about the course this emotional affection may take. If the Russians marched into Bulgaria, they would be warmly received—as Russians. How would they interpret such a reception? And would the Bulgars, in a sentimental moment, take any steps which they might regret on mature consideration? Already the underground organizations of Bulgaria are very active, and have provoked bitter reprisals.

(*l*) Although relations between Bulgaria and Turkey have recently been very correct, Hitler's task would be easier if he were to select Turkey as a victim. Just as the Bulgars still regard the Russians as Russians, they still regard the Turks as Turks, in spite of a change of government just as decisive as in Russia. In a land which suffered for five centuries, and where memories are long, hereditary friends and hereditary enemies are not forgotten in a day.

(*m*) It would be immoral as well as impracticable to attempt to bribe Bulgaria out of the war. The problems of Macedonia and Thrace will not be settled by force. Yet the Bulgar is very susceptible to ideas: we can recall the effects of the Fourteen Points in 1918. The Atlantic Charter might have the same effect now, if it were brought to life in collaboration with Russia.

(*n*) On the other hand, there can be no question of severe punishment of Bulgaria, for she has little to lose. We can legitimately take a stern line with those of her leaders who pursued treacherous paths to their own advantage; but if we plunge the Bulgarian nation into hopeless despair we hit ourselves as hard as the Bulgars.

(*o*) If we can persuade our friends to forget the bitterness of war rapidly, a development of a Yugoslav association across the Balkans would be a forward step.

(p) Probably long before this book appears we shall have seen interesting developments in the Bulgarian scene. As I write, the Germans need reinforcements very badly. They failed to get them from Boris, but have continuously pressed his successors. In May, 1944, they made a final and drastic attempt to get Bulgaria fully into the war. The Germans demanded complete subservience or complete control. They got a new puppet government, under M. Bagrianov. It proceeded to launch a campaign of terror against recalcitrants, including many who were already engaged in guerrilla warfare. Its excesses prompted opposition, and there is every indication of serious and rising opposition. It is not confined to Communist or pro-Russian groups. One section of the Army is gravely affected: two divisions, held to be "unreliable," have had to be disarmed, and General Ivan Boidev and a group of dismissed officers have retired to the Macedonian mountains in traditional fashion, to consolidate a forcible opposition there.

The bombing of Sofia and other targets by American and British aircraft has seriously diminished what little enthusiasm ever existed in Bulgaria for the war. But the Bulgars note that, although the Germans are using their ports and airfields as bases against Russia, the Russians have not retaliated with bombings—in fact, they still retain diplomatic relations with Bulgaria. Obviously their patience is not unlimited, however, and before these words are printed we may have witnessed a new turn of events. It is difficult to see how Bulgaria is going to escape civil war, as German pressure increases. The moment is ripe for astute Allied statesmanship—to counter the German move, even if it does not get Bulgaria out of the war. The active underground organization does not consist entirely of Communists—not by any means.

(q) One difficult problem of the occupied countries is easy in Bulgaria—an alternative to the present government on the approach of the Allies. There are plenty of Peasant and Liberal leaders in jail, men with large sections of the population behind them, to take over the control of the country at short notice with beneficent backing.

(*r*) In the Bulgars we have a sterling peasant people, with all the faults of their type but with all the virtues. We shall need a combination of friendly firmness and great patience, but nobody who knows this sturdy and hard-working folk would ever doubt its potential greatness.

# 3

## ROUMANIA

### I

THERE IS AN OLD Balkan adage that you can trust a Roumanian so long as his shirt dangles outside his trousers.

That is to say, so long as he remains a peasant. Then he wears the homespun white trousers and smock-shirt, hanging loosely down to his thighs. If he turns politician and goes to town, naturally he tucks his shirt inside his trousers, Western-fashion: then, according to his neighbours—and according to Roumanian peasants—he is no longer the same man.

Roumania is an irritating land. The Bulgarians are poor because the country never could be rich. Roumania has so many things, which other states desire: a rich land, a large surplus of grain, and a huge output of oil. Thus she can secure ample quantities of foreign exchange for purchases abroad, on a scale denied to Bulgaria. Yet the standard of life is almost as low.

Roumania is a land of great variety and infinite charm. The Old Kingdom consisted of the provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia, on the Danubian plain between the Carpathians and the Black Sea. To these were added in 1918 Bessarabia, between the Pruth and the Dniester, and today the source of much argument; Bukovina, a pleasant countryside; and Transylvania, one of the loveliest corners of all Europe.

I have known travellers who visited Bucarest and imagined that they had seen Roumania. No greater error was ever made. The imitation "Paris of the East" has but little connection with the peasant valleys which form the real Roumania. It represents a serious political error. Because of its long Turkish submergence,

Roumania was backward and undeveloped: foreign loans poured in—for the natural riches of the country offered good security—but few of them were expended upon the welfare of the people: especially on communications, the life-line of peasant economy. Instead, kings and politicians involved themselves in the building of a magnificent capital, far too grand and rich for a peasant country.

The contrast is vivid. The Roumanian peasant's family lives in a wooden hut of two rooms, four or five to the room, primitively furnished. His farm is tiny—the average is only 2.65 hectares of arable ground, with 0.61 hectares of communal grazing and 0.35 hectares of communal woodland. (A hectare is about two and a half acres.) Over 500,000 Roumanians have no land at all, and there is no man more unhappy than the landless peasant. His agriculture is primitive in method, but he has had few opportunities or inducements to better it. Taxation is always the bane of peasant life. The Roumanian is taxed not on his income but on the value of his farm and implements. If he buys a tractor or builds a barn he pays more tax. In bad years he often works at a loss—but still has to pay his tax lest he be evicted from his land. And when that tax is devoted, not to the betterment of his conditions but to the enrichment of officials, and the building of a luxurious capital, his indignation can be understood.

Not that it is necessary to move out of Bucarest to note the vivid contrasts of Roumanian life! I paid two dollars for a bed in a luxurious modern hotel. Cheap enough? But at that time a labourer's wage was twenty cents a day. I wandered from the Calea Victoriei, the luxury street of the Balkans: within five minutes I was in an oriental slum, smelly and insanitary. Side by side flourish artificial gaiety and the misery of real poverty, always more apparent in towns than in villages. It is contrast which makes life startling. In Bulgaria there are no rich, so poverty is not remarkable. In Roumania there are a few people who fatten on the misfortunes of others, and flamboyantly display the resultant wealth. Revolutions have been caused by less.

I was always happy when I left Bucarest behind and got into

the villages of the great plain. The capital city may be an excrescence, but the land is vital—78 per cent of the Roumanian people live by its cultivation: the common labour unit is the family. Women and children work in the fields beside the man of the house. They work hard: they have to work hard, or they would not live. Their pleasures are those of rural life. Artistically their standards are high: the shepherd contemplatively guarding his flock may be a philosopher or a poet, or he may simply pass on the folk-tales of previous generations. The humble peasant will spend hours of precious time carving out an ornamental gateway to his primitive home: or sometimes he will whitewash the timber and embellish it with cunning designs. Some of the old Roumanian monasteries are unique of their kind, magnificently decorated outside and in. The Roumanian peasant has always been a more peaceful character than any of his neighbours: his country has never known a violent revolution. His relief from frustration has been sought in modest artistic pleasures rather than political murders.

As in Hungary, the gypsies are the accepted guardians of the national music. They are a remarkable tribe, in great demand at weddings and feasts. Most of them play only by ear. It seemed to be their delight to ask me, as a stranger, to hum or whistle a tune. Immediately a fiddler would take up the air: the others would join him in perfect harmony. Once, when challenged, I could think only of "God Save the King," and hummed its rather cumbersome air. The gypsies played it over, then began to improvise on it: within a few minutes the village was dancing to its strains.

Not every feature of Balkan gypsy life is as pleasant as its music. Some of the tribes of Serbian gypsies are very tough, and sometimes dangerous. Others live by horse-dealing, or as tinkers, or by petty theft. They are scarcely a menace to economic standards, for although they will accept wages far below recognized figures, it is very difficult to persuade them to take on a regular job. A few have settled down on the outskirts of towns, and act as scavengers and peddlers. Most still prefer the rough camp, where living conditions are primitive. In one I slept in a tent

formed of cow-skins: sixteen men, women, and children lay closely packed on the floor of dried mud. Before we retired, we had feasted from the communal stew-pot. Rather too late, I discovered that the meat course consisted of a dead dog found casually by the wayside!

Yet I always enjoyed the gypsies of the Balkans. Their kleptomaniac habits were disconcerting, but their cheery spirit and sharp wits were always invigorating. Their ingenuity in making use of whatever is handy stands them in good stead. The gypsy musicians, for example, are seldom paid a fee, but are allowed to make an occasional collection. As there is no mutual trust, they catch a fly and put it in the right hand of the man who is to go round with the collection plate. On his return he must first exhibit the fly--his alibi against the charge of peculation. But in one gypsy band I heard a fierce argument--was the fly the collector had brought back the same one with which he had started out?

As is common in the Balkans, a Roumanian village can be almost self-supporting. Embroidered dresses, carpets, pottery, and carving reveal the rich art and craft of the peasant. Yet it is and always must be subsidiary to his work on the land.

Before 1918, a small number of large landowners owned a great share of Roumania. Then, to satisfy peasant aspirations, their estates were broken up into tiny farms. The peasants were pleased, but the landowners were indignant: the compensation given to them was fragmentary even at its face value, but the slump in the value of Roumanian currency rendered it almost worthless. Today no man may own more than 300 hectares of arable land, or 500 hectares of forests and grazing grounds.

Roumania is not as overcrowded as Bulgaria, but her situation is not too healthy. Her population is 19,852,000; her area, 295,000 square kilometres (114,000 square miles--the size of Italy). Of these, 145,000 square kilometres are cultivable, and the density of rural population is 80 to the square kilometre--far too high. What is more, it increases rapidly. The birth-rate in Roumania is one of the highest in Europe--it has topped 37 per 1,000 of the

population. The death-rate is also high, but the rate of natural increase averages 12 per 1,000 every year. Each four years the population of Roumania increases by a million souls.

Here is one reason for the low standard of living. Another lies in the peasant's conservatism: he uses few fertilizers, tries to get something for nothing from the land; his ploughing merely scratches the surface. Thus, through the generations, his rich soil has become impoverished: its yield is poor—only about 10 quintals to the hectare for wheat, less than half of the British average. Yet the peasant complaint is sound: why should he grow more when he cannot sell it? Often he cannot even get it to market—I have remarked differences of 250 per cent in agricultural prices at distances of forty miles. The rich peasant is the man whose land adjoins a railway. But even then, where shall he send his produce?

True, he does not starve; but his diet is monotonous. I tired of the eternal *mamaliga*, a podgy corn porridge, the principal or sole item of every meal; in the fruit season there were melons and apples; on special occasions, a lean and wiry chicken; the coarse cheese of the countryside; sour milk; very occasionally, meat.

The corn grows high in the sun-drenched plains: a man on a horse can move unseen among it. The quality is good. The next crop of importance is wheat—the annual production averages 4,500,000 metric tons: corn totals more than 6,000,000. Much of both crops is exported. Of recent years substantial quantities of other crops have been produced: hemp, flax, beets, tobacco, and soya beans, rye, oats, barley, and potatoes are grown in quantity. The vine is extensively cultivated—one-fifth of the area of French vineyards, but the wine has only a local reputation. Fruit is richer: Roumanian plums are famous, and are used for making a favourite plum brandy.

In the hills the shepherd flourishes: there are 13,000,000 sheep in Roumania, a small number for such a country, which has never recovered from the depredations of the occupying German armies during the last war. None of Roumania's livestock figures are impressive: 2,200,000 horses, 4,400,000 cattle, and 3,000,000 pigs.



There is an export trade to Central Europe, but it is capable of wide expansion. Of Roumania's peasants 37 per cent have no draught animals at all—not even an ox or a buffalo. The crudeness of their agriculture can be imagined.

Roumanian forests are rich, beech and oak predominating. Nor has the local forester any peer in his trade; or in his handling of the rough rafts on their precarious journey down the turbulent rivers.

Nature has been very generous to Roumania. The oil wells were mostly developed and controlled by foreign companies—Roumanians theoretically owned only 9.7 per cent of the output, but the government takes a liberal share of each company's earnings. Maybe both have been too greedy. Production declined from 8,466,000 metric tons in 1934 to 6,603,000 in 1938. Some experts claim that the life of the Roumanian oil industry is not likely to be long—that the reserves worth exploiting amount to only sixty to a hundred million tons. Apart from Germans, impelled by political motives, few outside companies have attempted any research in Roumania recently. Oil prospecting is a risky business, and a speculator looks for some return for his trouble. Conditions in Roumania have combined to see that he does not get it. If he fails, he loses his outlay: if he strikes oil, then the Roumanian government takes the bulk of the profits.

Today attention is turned to Roumania's mineral wealth. Coal production approaches a million tons annually: there are considerable deposits of iron ore, bauxite, manganese, chromium, copper, mercury, lead, and antimony: there is sufficient salt for the country's use. For power, besides coal and oil, there are natural gas, timber, and endless possibilities of harnessing the mountain streams. There are even gold and silver mines, producing 6,000 kilograms of each annually.

Thus Roumania has the basis for a sound and successful economy—many of Bulgaria's problems do not exist. Progress to date has been slow. There is no heritage of technical skill such as exists among Britishers—and is not always appreciated. The gap between the peasant craftsman and the factory operative is very

wide. Yet Roumania's principal lack has been that of capital for the purchase abroad of the machinery needed to develop her resources. This in turn is a confession of the failure of her economic policy: she had so many things the world wanted, and could have asked for machinery in return.

True, some progress has been made. The textile industry can now meet most of the country's requirements. The metal trades are advancing; so is heavy industry, ranging from locomotives to steel bridges and aeroplanes.

Herein lies the tragedy of Roumania: most of the Balkan countries are poverty-stricken because they have never had a chance of being anything else; Roumania could have been rich, yet remained poor like the rest. Her politicians should have read the Parable of the Talents.

Because Roumania is at present overpopulated, industrial conditions have always been unsatisfactory. Landless peasants and unemployed labourers must survive: they tend to accept work at any price in a land where social services scarcely exist. As labour organizations have been rigorously discouraged, the results can be imagined. Wages were only 38 per cent of equivalent standards in neighbouring Czechoslovakia. A complete overhaul of industrial legislation should be the first task of the Roumania which emerges from conflict. The old policy was to lower industrial standards of life to peasant poverty; but no one ever made worse conditions better by making better conditions worse.

## II

Roumania's second tragedy was scarcely her own fault—she had frontiers against six different neighbours, only three of whom were friendly.

Her expansion in 1918 was justified: until then, millions of Roumanians had lived under foreign rule in Bessarabia and Transylvania. But her new frontiers stretched so far that they included large minorities—inevitable in such an ethnic jumble as the Balkans. Of the population 70 per cent was Roumanian. The rest

included 1,568,000 Magyars, 792,000 Germans, 800,000 Jews, 170,000 Turks, 290,000 Bulgars, 1,220,000 Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, and other Slav elements. Most of these groups will need a separate section for the consideration of their problems.

We have seen that the bulk of the population is rural. Bucarest houses 800,000 people; Chishinev, 150,000; and Cluj, 105,000. No other city runs into six figures.

The administration was based on the French model, with local communes (which sometimes worked very well) and a Senate and Chamber of Deputies (which did not). There was complete religious liberty. The State Church was Greek Orthodox in creed, but was governed by its own patriarch, and covered the bulk of the Roumanian population. The Magyars were Roman Catholics; most of the Germans, Protestants; there were considerable bodies following the Mosaic, Moslem, and Armenian Christian faiths. I heard from Jews many complaints of political and economic discrimination, but none of religious persecutions.

Your educated Roumanian is a sophisticated man-of-the-world, very intelligent and well informed. The Roumanian peasant is also intelligent, but not well educated: as often as not, he is quite illiterate: a fraction of the money spent upon the beautification of Bucarest, transferred to village schools, might have achieved remarkable results. I have said that contrasts are very striking. In Bucarest I saw a very beautiful Roumanian girl, deliciously and expensively turned out in Parisian style: next on the pavement was an old gypsy woman; her long brown breasts hung from her rags as she staggered forward carrying a huge sack of wood. I rode down a modern street in an open cab, droszki type, behind a Russian coachman; he wore a long corduroy coat, and was a member of an ancient sect, his forefathers driven from Russia generations ago: the Skopzi. Their religion is not exciting, except in one detail: they believe and practise purity and chastity--and they castrate themselves after a son has been born to them.

Random memories of this pleasant land and its charming people crowd into my mind as I prepare to examine their many problems. In a Carpathian village I found a lot of hens painted green: the

eagles had been busy, but the intelligent peasant saved the rest of his chickens by this primitive camouflage! And in a Bucarest hotel I read a notice, "Guests are requested not to discuss politics in public"—admirable advice at the time, both for the guests and for the hotel.

I recall the ubiquity and adaptability of the Jew, a travelling bank. Crossing into Roumania, I had only English pound notes. "That's all right," said the host at the inn, "I'll just go to the door and call a Jew." That enterprising merchant immediately gave me more than the official rate of exchange for my pound.

In one little town a local shopkeeper offered to take care of my bicycle while I looked around the town—for a bicycle was a novelty, and the attention it attracted was a trifle too intimate for my liking. On my return, I found a large crowd round the shop window—and saw my bicycle prominently displayed there: the enterprising shopkeeper was, of course, a Jew.

I remember a village where rain was badly needed to save the crops. So the peasants paid over a few pence to the gypsies: then two little gypsy girls, clad only in leaves, danced the *paparuda* up and down the dusty street of the village: both they and their patrons were confident that their invocations would bring the rain.

The Roumanian railways are few, slow and unreliable. I saw a friend onto a train, and set off on a thirty-five-mile ride by bicycle—and arrived there before him. His train journey took three and a half hours.

There is only one bridge across the Danube below Belgrade: it is at Cernavoda, between Bucarest and Constantza, and is of great strategic as well as economic importance. Elsewhere, ferries are the rule. There are boats on the Danube, but on some of its tributaries more primitive methods prevail. Once, on a river bank, I shouted for a ferry. Nobody appeared, but presently a huge water-buffalo swam across the river and stood beside me. Later, a youth explained to me that this was the ferry, and showed me how to use it. He undressed, and tied his bundle of clothes to the buffalo's horns: the buffalo swam with the flat of his head above

water, keeping the clothes dry, while the youth hung on to his tail.

I encountered gracious hospitality everywhere: illiterate peasants in direst poverty offered me all they had—and I could pay only by subterfuge.

I have never ceased to marvel at the courage of the peasant, whatever his race. He has many faults, but one outstanding characteristic. The Turks learned it too late; Stalin recognized it early, and temporized with it; Hitler tries to ignore it, but cannot. It is simply this—that the peasant is indestructible. The more he is dashed to the ground, the more strongly he rises: for he is Antacus, and the soil is his mother.

### III

Two thousand years ago the Balkans were inhabited by a medley of tribes generally described as Thracians. Among them were the Dacians, who lived north of the Danube. The Romans found them difficult to subdue: eventually in A.D. 98 Trajan led a large army into Dacia and conquered the land. His triumphal column at Rome gives a unique record of his campaign.

As was customary, he allocated grants of land to his legionaries. They took local girls as their wives, and Romanized the Dacian tongue. Other émigrés helped, for Dacia was freely used as a Roman Siberia. The Latinized language persists with surprising purity to this day, though naturally it includes a large admixture of words of Slavonic origin. It is sometimes possible to trace Roman blood in the features of the people, very different from those of their Slav neighbours. Roumanian girls, in particular, can be classed among the beauties of Europe. It is important to realize that the Roumanians regard themselves as a Latin race, not a Balkan people, though they have, of course, freely intermingled with the neighbouring tribes.

(Hungarian historians deny the Roumanians their romantic origin, and claim that they are a mixture of Slav and Mongolian peoples, who happened to pick up the Roman language. But, as

we shall see, history can be interpreted—and perverted—politically, and the Hungarian case is prejudiced by the quarrel over Transylvania. It is, however, true that the Roumanian-Latin traditions have been assiduously fostered during the past hundred years, and that until 1850 most Roumanians used the Cyrillic alphabet.)

It is interesting to note in passing that Dacians came with subsequent Roman armies to Britain; considerable settlements of them were planted near Hadrian's Wall and, farther south, near Cirencester. Readers who belong to these areas may have a more intimate interest in Roumania than they realize!

When the Roman authority weakened and died, Dacia was swept by successive waves of barbarian invaders. For centuries it was submerged; there are no more than casual mentions of "Romani" people in current historical records. It is probable that the pastoral tribes retired before the invaders to the fastnesses of the Carpathians for security. By the thirteenth century, however, they had begun to re-emerge: the plains of their forefathers were now deserted wastes, but the soil beneath the rank vegetation was rich. Before the century's end, two provinces were beginning to take form; they were known as Wallachia and Moldavia; their organization was almost tribal, subject to their own princes; and they were disturbed by the feudal turmoils of the day. At different times they were ruled by Polish and Hungarian overlords.

Then came the Turks: for nearly four hundred years they were masters of what we now call Roumania. Their rule was corrupt and inefficient: at first the two provinces continued under the rule of their own princes—the Turks were forbidden to settle north of the Danube, where even today the minarets halt abruptly. Later, governorships were sold to the highest bidders: often Greeks called "Phanariots," who saw great possibilities in the arrangement whereby they were allowed to recoup their outlay—and more—by levying their own taxes. One governor had the original idea of prohibiting the entry of certain essential goods, and then *smuggling* them in, to his own profit. The condition of the peas-

ants was miserable in the extreme. There were frequent revolts—but peasant risings were always pitiable tragedies.

In 1774 Wallachia and Moldavia received a modicum of self-government. For nearly a century they were no more than pawns in the long struggle between Russia and Turkey—one campaign of the Crimean War was fought on Roumanian soil. Yet the language which had been miraculously preserved during the long centuries of subjection proved a strong unifier. The ideals of national freedom, sweeping Eastern Europe, found a ready response, double awakened by Turkish misrule. Peasants rose in revolt against their Turkish and Greek overlords.

By 1858 the people of the two states had so advanced in confidence as to declare their independence and unity. As usual, the Great Powers stepped in, jealous of one another's influence. The two provinces might virtually free themselves from Turkey, but they must remain separate states—each must elect its own prince. The Roumanians were never short of wit and intelligence: they thanked the Great Powers for their interest—and Wallachia and Moldavia proceeded to elect the same man as the prince of each state.

He was a good choice, Alexander Cuza: very progressive, full of ideas for the betterment of his people. His schemes for education and peasant proprietorship were well in advance of the ideas of his day. Because of this, he fell foul of the landlords—mostly of Greek origin, jealous of their own privileges—and was driven out.

The Great Powers, accepting the union of the two provinces (which were still nominally within the Turkish Empire), agreed to the appointment of Prince Charles of Hohenzollern as their sovereign. He was a man of great political sagacity; his wife was no less distinguished: as "Carmen Sylva" she studied and collected the beautiful Roumanian folk-lore. Their task was difficult, but they shouldered it bravely. The Russian-Turkish War of 1877 eased the situation. The Roumanians allowed Russian troops to march across their territory; then joined them, fighting with distinction at the siege of Plevna, where the Turks made a desperate

stand. It was natural that Roumania should seize the moment to declare her independence. Again the Great Powers made the small states their sport. The Tsar of Russia was allowed to occupy Bessarabia, a Roumanian province; in "compensation," Roumania was allocated the Dobrudja, which was not Roumanian! As we have seen, this territorial juggling had long-spread and unfortunate effects.<sup>1</sup>

Internal progress was slow: the corruption inherited from Turkish days rotted the base of administration. It has persisted, in a diminishing degree, to our own day. Wandering about Roumania in 1933 and 1937, I found it not at all difficult to picture conditions as they were fifty years earlier.

Bribery has always been a feature of Balkan politics. It could scarcely be eradicated in a couple of generations. The men who took over the control of the reborn Roumania had been trained in Turkish methods, and knew no others.

We often see and hear eulogies of the British Civil Service. Most of them are deserved, for it is indeed the best in the world. Yet its outstanding feature usually passes unnoted, taken for granted—it is incorruptible. No one who does not know the East or the Balkans can appreciate all that this means. If you interview a British official it is useless to flourish pound notes—unless you wish to appear in the dock on a charge of attempted bribery. If you went to interview a Roumanian official, you did not stand much chance of getting far unless you did flourish currency notes.

The people who complain about "officialdom" in Britain ought to go to Roumania! Some form of permit is necessary for the most trifling occasions. The law concerned is not necessarily repressive in intent, but it is useful to provide a horde of jobs for friends of politicians. One of the first acts of a new Roumanian government is to dismiss its Civil Servants and to replace them with its own friends. The Goga-Cuza administration was only in office for six weeks in 1938, but when it fell the new government dismissed

<sup>1</sup> The problem of the Dobrudja has already been considered in the Bulgarian chapter.



25,000 Civil Servants who had been appointed during those six weeks!

Of course, Roumania is not alone in its use of the "spoils" system --which is quite common in the Balkans; in the United States, where it has long been a tradition, it is being supplemented—or possibly supplanted—by something more akin to the British system. The arguments against it are too obvious. The official knows that he may lose his job at the next election, so he makes as much as he can while in office. With certain outstanding exceptions, many of the Roumanian politicians have set the pattern for their employees. If you think I exaggerate or that my experiences were exceptional, ask any businessman of your acquaintance who has ever tried to trade with Roumania.

Corruption was encouraged by low salaries. A general received \$125 a month: while the cost of living—actual living, food, housing, and service—was much lower than in Western Europe, on his official pay alone he could scarcely maintain the status of a provincial bank manager here. Even a Cabinet Minister got only \$200 a month—officially. Civil Service clerks were paid about \$7.50 a week, and a skilled labourer was lucky if he made \$5. That is to say, nearly everybody felt bound to add to his salary or wage by any means, illicit or otherwise. The tragedy was, therefore, that graft was accepted as normal in Roumania because nearly everybody practised it. When government loans were floated it was an understood thing that a due proportion of the proceeds would go into the pockets of ministers concerned. They could scarcely complain when their subordinate staffs imitated their methods.

This results in grave hardship for the people. I have seen Roumanian peasants treated in such fashion as would have raised a riot in England. I saw a peasant pleading with the police; he had brought a calf to market, and they would not let him sell it until he had paid the marketing tax or had bribed the policeman. He could not pay the tax or the bribe until he had sold the calf—and he had to take it back to his farm. If he had sold it, the price would have been about \$6.25; of this, one-fifth would have gone in tax and bribes.

The petty corruption is almost beyond belief. The maze of officials is incredible. I never succeeded in posting and registering a parcel in Roumania under half an hour—as a Commissioner of Police warned me, unless I registered it, there was little hope of its reaching its destination. The complaints I heard on every hand were astounding—of the petty bribery necessary for the simplest transaction. These complaints came from Roumanians as well as minorities. Post-office clerks, working in collusion, would use postage stamps over and over again; there was a regular racket in railway tickets. I repeat that I would not have been so concerned except that the system was accepted as inevitable by rich and poor alike. It is not unknown in other Balkan countries.

This was the condition of Roumania in the nineteen-thirties: the state of the country in its earlier years can be imagined, for the progress which had been made was very real. Indeed, to the credit of King Carol, I must emphasize that I remarked a very considerable improvement even between 1933 and 1937.

The depressing side of Roumanian social conduct has been frequently described and often exaggerated. Not enough has been heard of the country's achievements—of her advance from the appalling conditions which were her legacy. Her schemes of agrarian reform were at least equal to any in South-eastern Europe. The standard of education was constantly rising: certainly the Roumanian intelligentsia could hold its own with any in the world. The judicial system was as good as any in the Balkans, even if the police system were as bad. In fact, had Roumania been allowed another twenty years of peace, her further progress might have been remarkable—for her great handicap, the Turkish legacy of graft, can only be eradicated by time.

But to continue our outline of Roumania's story: we have seen that her conduct in the Balkan Wars was scarcely commendable: by her "stab in the back" of Bulgaria she obtained Southern Dobrudja as her share of the spoils.

This event completely altered her international outlook—or, I should say, that of her leaders: the Roumanian people never lost their warm feelings towards France, leader of the Latin civilization which they had been taught to believe was the heritage they

shared. Until 1913 the Roumanian government had gravitated towards the Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary: they were the potential opponents of Russia, and the seizure of Bessarabia still rankled in Roumanian minds. Now Bulgaria clamoured for the return of Southern Dobrudja, and appeared likely to obtain German backing. Immediately Roumanian policy was reorientated. It is important to recover lost provinces, but it is even more important to hold those which you have.

Thus, in 1914, Roumania was neutral. Public sentiment was pro-French. The Allies, badly needing Balkan support to counter the German success with Bulgaria, found willing ears in Roumania. On August 28, 1916, she entered the war on our side. As reward for her aid, she was to receive Transylvania, Bukovina, and the Banat as far as the Theiss, a Danubian tributary crossing the Hungarian plain.

The Roumanian army advanced into Hungary, but the Germans and Bulgars crossed the Danube and cut its lines of communication. A Russian army of support had been promised, but it never arrived: this was a common failing of Russian armies in those days. The Roumanians fought bravely, as peasant armies almost always fight, but they were badly equipped and poorly led. The army was driven back into the north-eastern corner of the kingdom. Here some of the Russian troops arrived, far too late to be of service: the promised munitions never arrived at all.

For months the shortened line held: then came the Russian Revolution, and all support disappeared. The Roumanians fought well against overwhelming odds. Mr. Lloyd George paid them a fair tribute: their casualties totalled nine times those of Belgium. But when the Bolsheviks opened an attack in the rear, their fate was hopeless: Roumania was forced into surrender. By the Treaty of Bucarest (May 7, 1918) she lost the whole of the Dobrudja, a fringe of territory to Hungary, and had to submit to the spoliation of her resources by the Central Powers.

In the last moments of the war Roumania hurriedly joined in again, to share in the benefits accruing to a combatant. Her armies marched into Hungary, then in the throes of a Bolshevik Revolution. Roumania claims that she saved Hungary, and maybe the

whole of Central Europe, from the Communist menace, but the Hungarians never pretended to be grateful, insisting that they did the job themselves. They writhed in fury as they saw Roumanian troops in their streets—for, as we shall see, the Magyars have always looked down on the Roumanians as an inferior race.

Nor did subsequent events make the situation easier. Roumania had been shockingly looted by the Central Powers—including Hungary. Now she proceeded to recoup herself, for her economic state was parlous. Of 2,000 locomotives, the Central Powers had taken all but 50: the Roumanians now took 800 from Hungary. Similar requisitioning of other commodities followed. Roumanian conduct exactly matched that of Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians in Roumania, but it is easy to forget one's own misdeeds, and Hungarian wrath knew no bounds.

By the peace treaties, Roumania made very large territorial gains. The Southern Dobrudja was recovered from Bulgaria; Transylvania, part of the Banat, and Bukovina were taken from Austria-Hungary. Bessarabia had already been detached from Russia in the throes of the Revolution. Territory and population alike were more than doubled. Out of 17,000,000 people, however, 30 per cent were now non-Roumanians. It is the presence of these large minorities which has led to trouble in Roumania.

Nor was the post-war policy of successive governments always helpful. Democratic ideas clashed sadly with traditional interests. Elections were generally "managed"; bribery and corruption were rife. Indeed, in the low moral sense of the governing classes lies perhaps the principal clue to Roumanian discontent: not that it is a monopoly of this unhappy land.

Roumania has been ill served by its political parties. The Peasants' Party and the Liberals (who are not liberals, but conservatives) followed traditional lines, and had many honest, capable and well-meaning men in their ranks. Unfortunately these were swamped by grafters and place-seekers. The Liberal Party was led by a succession of members of the Bratianu family, skilled politicians who easily held their own with friends and opponents at home or abroad. The Peasant leader, Iuliu Maniu, was of a different type: a Transylvanian, a Roman Catholic (an unusual

Roumanian combination), and a peasant, he worked sincerely to better the lot of his class, to tackle the prevailing corruption, and to make politics honest. Maniu even made an attempt to organize clean elections, almost unknown in the Balkans, where only an accident can deprive the government in power of a majority. Voters were intimidated, ballot-boxes "lost," and petty bribery flourished. Maniu set himself against these practices, but underestimated the power of his opponents. He had the usual fault of



ROUMANIA, 1919-39.

the idealist—he thought that democracy alone was a sufficient guard against autoocracy. It may be, when its roots are firm and deep, but in Roumania this could not be claimed.

The extremist creeds promised little peace for Roumania. The Communists, if only because of geography, were in close touch with Russia, and had little chance of capturing the popular vote—for Russia was *not* popular in Roumania. The Fascist organizations, like the Iron Guard, ran true to type: one of their happiest expressions of political argument was the murder of a rival as he lay sick in hospital.

The weakness of democratic ideas, of course, played into the

hands of the Iron Guard, which began as a Roumanian idealist youth organization, gravitated towards Fascism with gangster methods, and finished as a Nazi auxiliary.

Today it is fashionable to condemn King Carol, yet he did his best for his country in very difficult circumstances. In Britain his reputation as a great lover overshadowed his political capacity; in Roumania his marital adventures were passed over lightly—especially in “society,” where moral standards were not especially high. His first abdication was largely prompted by scheming politicians; his second, by Axis pressure.

The foreign policy of Roumania was simple, and was shared by all parties. “What we have, we hold,” was their motto. All alliances were directed to this end. Hungary had lost territory to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Roumania, and made no secret of her revisionist ideas. Thus the three countries, backed by France, formed the Little Entente for mutual support against Hungarian claims. At the same time Bulgaria had territorial grievances against Roumania, Yugoslavia, and Greece: thus these three countries were united in the Balkan Entente, directed against Bulgaria. Roumania had a further defensive alliance with Poland, for Russia had territorial claims against both countries.

The two Ententes were firmly supported in all the countries concerned—were the basis of all their foreign relations, and had the advantage that the *status quo* which inspired them was blessed by the League of Nations. The Roumanian support of the League of Nations was sincere and practical. The Foreign Minister, Titulescu, was one of the first to perceive the dangers of the Fascist-Nazi menace. Against her own economic interest, Roumania voted in favour of sanctions against Italy at the time of the Abyssinian War—and Italy was her best customer.

King Carol was no playboy or musical-comedy dictator. He recognized well before the war began the weakness attending the political disruption of France, Roumania’s traditional friend. He attempted to attain closer relations with Britain—his mother was a niece of Queen Victoria—but his official visit to London brought no practical results. Thereafter the Germans knew very well that Roumania could depend upon no support from the

West. They set themselves the task of breaking down the Balkan defensive treaties; the Italians, always influential in the Balkans, lent effective aid. Economic pressure was successfully applied, as in the case of Bulgaria; by 1939 Germany took 32.3 per cent of Roumania's exports and provided 39.3 per cent of her imports.

In addition, the figures for Roumanian trade with Czechoslovakia were 10.8 per cent and 16.8 per cent respectively. Thus, after the Nazi seizure of Czechoslovakia, the German grip on Roumanian economy was overwhelming.

The fall of Czechoslovakia meant far more than that, of course: it was a political blow of the first magnitude. The Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Roumania) was destroyed—apparently the firmest alliance in Europe. To Roumania's credit, her conduct at the time of the Munich crisis was quite correct: she offered her aid to her ally. The consent of Britain and France to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia rendered the alliance abortive.

Another practical effect of Munich was far-reaching. Most of Roumania's armaments had been supplied by the Skoda Works in Czechoslovakia, now in German hands. Roumania was thus dependent upon Germany—the country she might have to fight—for ammunition and essential spares. This realization inevitably had a moral effect; and it increased Roumania's economic dependence upon Germany. France, in the throes of industrial strife, could not make enough arms for her own needs, and Britain refused to supply any except on a cash basis!

German propaganda pressure on Roumania was heavy, aided by Fascist elements within. British attempts to counter its effects were feeble: indeed, for many years there was no attempt at all: the assumption was that the intelligent Roumanians would see automatically that the British case was better than the German. In fact it was scarcely presented: a British newspaper, several days old, cost 20 lei in Roumania—one-fifth of a labourer's daily wage: a German newspaper, flown from the Reich on its day of publication, cost 6 lei.

The British Council, in the last years before the war, made valiant efforts to retrieve the situation. It might have succeeded,

for popular sentiment was overwhelmingly pro-Ally, but its resources were hopelessly stinted by short-sighted politicians, prompted by "businessmen" who knew only one form of dividend. At the Anglo-American Institute at Bucarest 3,500 students were enrolled; but few of them could afford to buy English books. A 7s. 6d. book cost £1 in Roumania! Unlimited quantities of Nazi literature were available—free.

Fortunately, the French were more far-sighted. The sentimental affinity and the relationship of the language helped: the magazine with the largest circulation in Roumania was French.

Yet all the cultural activity in the world could not have counteracted the effects of Munich. The Balkan states believed that Britain and France, to save themselves, had given Hitler the "free hand in Eastern Europe" which was his main objective. The word "confidence" was blotted out of the European dictionary.

The Franco-British eleventh-hour guarantee of Roumania was welcomed though with many misgivings. One glance at the map showed that it was likely to consist mainly of words. Small countries have to make finer calculations than the stronger powers. Britain can make mistakes of policy, lose a series of initial battles, and yet recover to win. A small country has no such chance: it can be overrun in a few days.

On the Russian attack on Poland, therefore, Roumania made no attempt to implement her pact with her neighbour, for such a move would have been suicidal. With the Little Entente and the Polish Alliance both gone, Roumania turned energetically to the stronger organization of a Balkan Entente.

The moment was opportune. None of the Balkan countries wanted war. Both Hungary and Bulgaria declared that they would not press their revisionist claims until after the conflict—sincerely, for war would rob them of more than what they stood to gain. In the spring of 1940 Balkan unity was remarkably strong. It was shattered by the Russian seizure of Bessarabia, opening temptations which Hungary and Bulgaria could not resist. These situations are examined in the appropriate chapters.

Even before this, the position in Roumania had been drastically changed by the collapse of France. It was a moral as well as a



physical shock, so high had been French prestige. If mighty France could not stand up to Germany, how could Roumania hope to resist? If the Maginot Line crumbled, what would happen to the weaker and widespread Roumanian defences known as Carol's Moat? Further, the entry of Italy into the war again altered the entire strategic situation. Events in Western Europe showed that small countries no longer had any "rights." German pressure was intensified. The Roumanians discovered that in building up Carol's Moat they had neglected their inner defences. Native Fascists, with members of the extensive German minorities, were well organized for quisling activities.

The Iron Guard was the creation of Corneliu Codreanu. Like most ultra-nationalists, he was not even Roumanian—he was the son of a Polish father and a German mother: his real name was Zelinski. For a time Carol opposed the organization—its anti-Semitic fury was naturally objectionable to the king's mistress, Magda Lupescu, whom they taunted as of Jewish blood. In March, 1938, Carol had made one last effort to arrest the confusion in the political scene: he set up a military dictatorship. Codreanu was arrested and later "shot while attempting to escape." But with the native politicians evoking no trust or confidence among the people, and German influence behind Roumanian Fascist organizations, the state of the country was critical.

Yet again it was external pressure which wrecked Roumania. The Russian march into Bessarabia was followed by Bulgarian demands for Southern Dobrudja, and Hungarian demands for Transylvania. In a desperate attempt to hold provinces which he had recently proclaimed as "Roumanian for ever," Carol denounced the British guarantee and reorientated foreign policy "as determined by the new European order in the course of establishment." That is to say, he accepted German control.

It did not avail him. Roumanian provinces were torn from her frontiers. There was a storm of indignation throughout the land: the Fascist politicians directed it against Carol—who had actually been faced with impossible situations. The fate of Roumania was not in his hands: he did everything he could against his unscrupulous opponents and untrustworthy friends. Britain, his only pos-

sible ally, was fighting for her very life, alone. It is easy to blame him, but Carol had little option for most of his actions.

Popular indignation demanded a scapegoat. On September 8, 1940, Carol abdicated in favour of his son Michael. The Iron Guard had taken the lead in the anti-royal agitation, and, true to its type, attempted to murder him as he left the country. General Antonescu now became "Leader of the Roumanian people," virtually dictator: Roumania found itself a Fascist state, with the Iron Guard as the only political party. It was soon obvious that the new "Leader" was little more than a puppet, the controlling strings being manipulated in Berlin.

First, German "technical experts" arrived to train the Roumanian army. Doubtless the training was needed, but the "experts" soon assumed the proportions of an army of occupation. Before 1940 was out, there could be no further dissimulation. Roumania was completely in the German grip.

The situation did not pass without protest. Thousands of peasant local leaders and intellectuals were herded into concentration camps. The Gestapo control of Roumania was intensified, and always the Axis propaganda roused and maintained Roumanian feeling against Russia, so easily represented as the aggressor in Bessarabia.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, a deputation of Roumanian officers to an Allied mission met with a cool reception. Roumanian

<sup>1</sup> The Roumanians bitterly quoted the definition of the aggressor which had been submitted by Russia to the League of Nations. It was welcomed by the small nations—but the Great Powers were lukewarm, and it was never formally adopted. The admirable Russian definition reads:

*"Convention for the Definition of Aggression"*

"Art. 2. The aggressor in an international conflict shall be considered that state which is the first to commit any of the following actions:

- (1) Declaration of war upon another state;
- (2) Invasion by its armed forces, with or without a declaration of war, of the territory of another state;
- (3) Attack by its land, naval or air forces, with or without a declaration of war, on the territory, vessels or aircraft of another state;
- (4) Naval blockade of the coasts or ports of another state;
- (5) Provision of support to armed bands formed on its territory which have invaded the territory of another state, or refusal, notwithstanding the request of the invaded state, to take on its own territory all the measures in its power to deprive those bands of all assistance or protection.

"Art. 3. No political, military, economic or other considerations may serve as an excuse or justification for the aggression referred to in Art. 2."

diplomats who attempted to set up a "Free Roumania" movement were discouraged.

Subsequent events combined to complete the misery of Roumania. But before we record them, we must halt to examine the problems which were their real basis. The question of Southern Dobrudja we have seen satisfactorily solved: the frontier disputes with Hungary and Russia are still open issues.

#### IV

If all Balkan problems merely involved a decision between right and wrong, then our task would be relatively easy. More often, however, our choice has to be made between two rights: or, occasionally, two wrongs.

Bessarabia is a case in point. Ethnically, as we shall see, the province is largely Roumanian: economically it was developed within the Russian sphere.

Two thousand years ago it formed the eastern fringe of Roman Dacia. After the usual Balkan vicissitudes, by the fourteenth century it had become part of the Roumanian principality of Moldavia. As such it was conquered by the Turks, but was allowed a modest degree of local rule under its own princes. At this time the population was very largely Roumanian (or more properly, Moldavian: the word "Roumanian" is of recent origin. Indeed, in some Russian quarters even today a distinction is made between Moldavians and Wallachians—a distinction of only very slender racial and historic base.)

Then in 1812, Bessarabia changed hands. The Russian policy was very clear and decisive: it followed the political testament of Peter the Great towards its goal—Constantinople. Bessarabia was the first step, seized from Turkey in the confusion of the Napoleonic Wars. The transfer was presented to the world as the delivery of the Christian Roumanians from the tyranny of the Moslem despots. The peasants were not so sure; they had at least some personal freedom, whereas the Russian peasants were serfs. Fearing the same fate, the "delivered" peasants began to move

west, back to the "tyranny of the Moslem despots." The Turks, indeed, were overwhelmed with immigrants. They settled the difficulty in the fashion of the day. Declaring that there was an attack of plague in Bessarabia, they massacred the unfortunate peasants who tried to cross the river Pruth.

The Russian population in Bessarabia was never large; it consisted mainly of landowners, together with the soldiers and officials required for the administration of the province. The towns were rapidly occupied by Jews, who were not allowed to live in Russia proper, but were banished to the border provinces. The peasants, however, were mostly Roumanians, with important minorities of Bulgars, Germans, Ukrainians, and others. Once they found that serfdom was not to be introduced, a change of sovereignty meant little to them—peasants only want to be left alone.

They made no attempt to resist the prevailing Russification, and by 1914 less than 15 per cent could read or write the Roumanian language. Tens of thousands could not even speak it. Under the Russian régime, no one was allowed to learn to read and write in Roumanian unless he had first done so in Russian. Priests were compelled to conduct their services in Russian. Another half-dozen generations, and the people of Bessarabia would have been classed as Russians. This in spite of the fact that only 30 per cent of the population was Russian or Ukrainian, including troops and officials: for that matter, most of the other Russians and Ukrainians in Bessarabia had entered the province since its conquest.

For once there is no serious dispute between figures as to the racial characteristics of the province. Russian figures at the taking-over in 1812 showed it as 86 per cent Roumanian: by 1862 this had been reduced to 75 per cent—by the introduction of Russian and German colonists. Even in 1897, when the Russian census counted as Russians all those who understood any Russian, the figures showed 47 per cent of Roumanians, as against 19.5 per cent Ukrainians, 11.8 per cent Jews, and only 8 per cent Russians. In 1915 the Russian figures showed over 70 per cent of the population of Bessarabia as Roumanian. Thus, despite the process of

Russianization, Bessarabia has always been predominantly Roumanian in its racial character.

The Russian occupation of Bessarabia was interrupted in 1856, when important districts were handed back to Moldavia. They were resumed in 1878 despite Roumanian protests. As a recognition of Roumania's claims to the province, she was given the Northern Dobrudja in compensation for its loss. Thereafter the whole of Bessarabia was under Russian rule until 1917. Throughout this time the Roumanians resented the loss of their border province, but their feelings were tempered by respect for the Russians inculcated by the leaders of the Orthodox Church. We have already seen that religious feelings have had wide influence in the Balkans. In its first years, Soviet Russia lost some of the sympathy it might have commanded by its anti-clerical policy. It was only natural that this policy should be condemned by Orthodox priests in other countries.

In the early stages of the Russian Revolution, Kerensky recognized the principle of autonomy for Bessarabia. A National Assembly was convoked at Chishinev, the capital. Naturally, it was not elected—revolutionary assemblies never are. Subsequently, the Bolsheviks complained that the council was composed exclusively of big landlords. At the same time Russian Imperialists claimed that it was a Bolshevik organization! Actually, it was formed of bourgeois elements—teachers, lawyers, farmers, and the like—the men who normally lead a peasant community at a time of crisis; all nationalities were proportionately represented.

Ukraine was at this time a separate republic, under German influence, so that Bessarabia was cut off from Russia. In any case, Ukraine recognized Bessarabia as an independent republic. Disbanded Russian soldiers were looting in Bessarabia, and the National Council appealed *both to Russia and to Roumania*. Russian troops were sent, but promptly joined the pillagers. A Roumanian force helped to restore order, but the original declaration of an independent republic could scarcely be implemented: Bessarabia could not exist by itself, in the midst of a warring world. On April 8, 1918, the National Council passed a resolution demand-

ing union with Roumania by 86 votes to 3; there were 36 abstentions, but some of them were men who were anxious to proceed by more leisurely and democratic methods. Others, however, were Russians and Ukrainians who declared that the issue had been prejudiced by the presence of Roumanian troops on Bessarabian soil. Nevertheless there is little doubt that the vote represented the prevailing wish of the majority in Bessarabia. At the same time, however, the Council reserved wide powers of local autonomy to the province—a decision which was never honoured by Bucarest.

This summary of events is rather important. It shows that there was no question of a "seizure" of Bessarabia by Roumania, but a voluntary act on the part of the majority of its people.

Ethnically, the Roumanian claim could scarcely be questioned, considering Bessarabia as a whole. The withdrawal of troops and officials lowered the proportion of the Russian and Ukrainian population to little more than 20 per cent, while Roumanians form nearly 60 per cent. The remainder is divided between Jews and the other minorities.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless it is important to emphasize this: that the outlook of the Bessarabians was very local—I did not note that fervent nationalism which distinguished the Roumanians of Transylvania. It seemed that economic difficulties tended to neutralize any patriotic sentiment.

The atmosphere was unfortunate. True, the estates of the great Russian landowners were broken up and the land presented to the peasants, a move which was heartily welcomed. At the same

<sup>1</sup> The census of 1930 showed the following amazing medley of races in Bessarabia and illustrated the difficulty of frontier-drawing in Eastern Europe:

Roumanians	1,610,757	Greeks	2,044
Russians	351,912	Albanians	1,809
Ukrainians	314,211	Armenians	1,509
Jews	204,858	Hungarians	829
Bulgars	163,726	Turks	541
Germans	81,089	Czechoslovaks	540
Gagauz (Christian Turks)	98,172	Yugoslavs	345
Gypsies	13,518	Others	10,438
Poles	8,104		

time, however, local councils were abolished and the province was administered from Bucarest. This procedure was not confined to Bessarabia, but was part of a deliberate policy of building up a strong Roumania. Then the peasants discovered that the ownership of land involved responsibilities as well as privileges: there never was a peasant population which paid taxes willingly, and Roumania had been impoverished by the war.

The economic difficulties were increased by the inborn peasant conservatism. Bessarabia is fertile: had mixed farms been encouraged, it would have been self-supporting in food. But the peasants' grandfathers had grown only grain, and no one could persuade the present generation to alter this custom. But, prior to 1917, Bessarabia had formed part of the great Russian granary, and had a ready market for its wheat and corn. This was now lost: instead, all surpluses had to compete with Roumanian crops, which already were too large for home consumption and difficult to market abroad.

Communications were the key to the economic problem. To serve the whole 17,000 square miles of Bessarabia there are only 530 miles of railway track: much of this is of recent construction. The roads are appalling. Sixty miles are classed as "passable in all weathers," but I was never able to find them. The remainder are mere dust-tracks, only negotiable by wooden peasant carts.

The Roumanians were certainly unlucky in Bessarabia. The peasants, their markets lost, and groaning under an inefficient government, were in a state of revolt. The government argued that it was doing its best to construct communications: when the railway from Chishinev to Jassy was completed, then Bessarabian produce could flow to world markets. At great expense the railway was completed—but then the world slump intervened, and nobody wanted or was able to buy Bessarabian produce. Naturally enough, the peasants blamed the government at Bucarest for everything; it had very many faults, but it was criticized far beyond its deserts.

However, there was much that could have been done. Living conditions in Bessarabia, relics of the days of Tsarist rule, were

deplorably low. Most peasant families lived in one-roomed shacks of mud and timber, primitively furnished. There was no starvation, but the single-crop method of farming meant a hopelessly monotonous diet. Anything demanding the expenditure of money was a luxury; even boots. There was an air of neglect about the infrequent villages—drainage schemes abandoned, fertile land lying fallow for lack of markets for its crops. I wondered if the Roumanian neglect of Bessarabia was the usual Balkan lethargy; or if it were dictated by fear that the heritage might only be temporary—by uncertainty about the intentions of a powerful neighbour?

Certainly misgivings were justified. Official Russian maps continued to show Bessarabia as a Russian province, temporarily alienated. Not until 1937 was there any communication at all between the two countries. Roumanians claimed that Russian agents exploited the economic difficulties of Bessarabia to aggravate discontent.

When two sides claim a disputed province, there is one obvious solution—to let the people of the province decide. The Russians claimed that the Bessarabian decision in 1918 was made in the throes of war, under duress,<sup>1</sup> and could not be accepted. A plebiscite was demanded on several occasions. The Roumanians refused: they were quite confident of the result, they claimed, but declined to admit the Russian claim at all. (If they had, then Bulgaria and Hungary would have promptly submitted similar claims. True, the election results showed no separatist tendencies, but we have seen that Balkan election results do not always mean what they purport to mean.)

My own impression, in 1937, was that a plebiscite would have gone in favour of Roumania. It does not even follow that all the Russians and Ukrainians would have voted for incorporation in the Soviet Union. I found many complaints among them, but they were little more than echoes of the grievances of Roumanian peasants as well. Certainly they never caused trouble, as did the

<sup>1</sup> Later, the Roumanians bitterly compared the charges with the enforced decisions of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to enter the Soviet Union, in 1940.



Magyars in Transylvania. Bessarabia was fortunate in one respect: when the great estates were broken up, there was enough land to give a farm to all peasants—Russian and Ukrainian as well as Roumanian. This would have affected the voting: there would have been some conservative peasants who would have preferred remaining under Roumanian rule, owning their own plot of land, to passing under the Soviets and being incorporated into a collective farm.

I should say that this aspect is considerably altered now that Russian nationalism has been revived: racial patriotism can rise above political and economic considerations—even above religious considerations, which mean a lot in this corner of the world. Most of the Bessarabian Jews would probably have favoured Russia, for they were not being well treated—we shall study the Jewish problem in Roumania in a later section. They were the traders, financiers, and usurers of the region: as most peasants were in debt to them, they were unpopular, and anti-Semitic parties won striking victories in Bessarabian constituencies. Further, the growth of cooperative ideas in marketing and shopping threatened their livelihood: they were heavily taxed, and unpopular with the police.

(I should perhaps re-emphasize that the considerable Jewish element in Eastern Europe was often responsible for the statistical contradictions introduced into propaganda warfare. When it suited them, the Roumanians would include all Jews as Roumanians: the Russians claimed them as Russians.)

I think that the majority of Roumanians in Bessarabia would not have favoured return to Russia—this in spite of their many economic grievances and the fact that their racial consciousness was not as strongly developed as that of other provinces. There were some ideas about an autonomous Bessarabia included in Roumania; but most peasants classed themselves frankly as Roumanians, demanding only the chance of a higher standard of life. At the same time, it is doubtful whether any potential Roumanian majority would have been as large in 1938 as in 1918. Twenty years of inefficient rule had alienated the goodwill of thousands

of men whose nationalistic consciousness was not strong. And no one could foresee the result of a plebiscite held, say, in 1945.

Although many chances of a peaceful settlement of the problem were missed, by 1938 the tension appeared to have eased. Roumania, by alliance and popular will, was strongly bound to the anti-Axis allies; Russia, so frequently depicted by Hitler as his principal victim, appeared likely to join the common front. The fall of Czechoslovakia was the broken link which severed the binding chain of common interest. The Russian-German pact of August, 1939, restored the old atmosphere of suspicion. Public opinion in Roumania was overwhelmingly in favour of France and Britain; Poland was her ally. Ideas on Russia, never very favourable, were now definitely unfriendly.

Maybe the Roumanian leaders guessed what lay ahead. They soon had ample pointers. On December 6, 1939, the organ of the Comintern declared: "A policy of minority oppression and exploitation of the masses exists in Transylvania, Bessarabia, the Dobrudja, and Bukovina. The Communist International urges all workers to take up the decisive fight against those who inflame the Roumanian people against the oppressed minorities."

This was a plain warning of events to come—and was accepted as an open invitation to Hungary and Bulgaria to prepare to join in the sharing of the spoils. It was followed by a speech by M. Molotov on March 29, 1940: "Of the southern neighbouring states I have mentioned Roumania as one with which we have no Pact of Non-Aggression. This is due to the existence of an unsettled dispute, the question of Bessarabia, whose seizure by Roumania the Soviet Union has never recognized, although we have never raised the question of the recovery of Bessarabia by military means."

Already the Roumanians were thoroughly alarmed. On the eastern bank of the river Dniester, the boundary between Russia and Bessarabia, lived a mixed population which included nearly a million Roumanians—although they were easily outnumbered by Ukrainians and Russians. Though geographically part of

Ukraine, this district had been formed into a separate Moldavian Soviet Republic. Obviously, it was argued, the adoption of the ancient Roumanian name meant that its territory was to expand. Would the Russians halt at Bessarabia? Would they seize the whole of Moldavia? Was that why they professed that the Moldavians and Wallachians were different peoples? Would they attempt to seize the whole of Roumania, to gain a common frontier with Russia's old protégé, Bulgaria? In the disturbed atmosphere protagonists of both sides reaped a rich harvest of confusion and suspicion.

On the collapse of France, the situation became critical. On June 26, 1940, M. Molotov handed an ultimatum to the Roumanian Minister in Moscow. It demanded the evacuation of Bessarabia and the northern half of Bukovina within twenty-four hours. If the Roumanians did not agree, at least they were under no illusions as to what would happen. *Pravda* described the episode as "applying peaceful methods to diplomatic issues." The Roumanians, rather naturally, used quite different expressions.

With France beaten and Britain fighting for her life, Roumania turned to Germany for aid—for months her leaders, mistrusting the practical value of the Allied "guarantee," had tried to re-insure with the Axis to avoid participation in the conflict. But Hitler would make no move. This was the time when he called Stalin his friend, diplomatically forgot what he had written in *Mein Kampf*, and strove to get all the supplies he could from Russia. He could not afford to offend his partner.

Nevertheless, it is not difficult to picture his spleen. He had invested large sums in Bessarabia in the cultivation of the soya bean, of invaluable use to a beleaguered nation. There was a considerable German colony in the province. Both must be sacrificed for the pacification of Russia.

Roumania was helpless. Weeks earlier the King and his ministers had made the usual patriotic declarations about defending Bessarabia to the last man. Now it had to be abandoned—not quite without a shot being fired, for some of the Roumanian units did not receive the order to withdraw in time. Within the stipu-

lated twenty-four hours Roumania had lost a province and Russia had seized a strategic frontier.

Recently I discussed the episode with Russian friends. Without any prejudice to their claims, the consensus of their opinion was that the move was not well timed, and would have been better postponed until the general settlement. For its effects were wide. The unity of the Balkan peoples, desperately anxious to avoid the war, was abruptly shattered. Bulgaria and Hungary presented their claims in forcible terms: the whole atmosphere of the Balkans deteriorated so rapidly that Hitler was able to pursue without hindrance his favourite policy of tackling his victims one by one. Further, when he attacked Russia, Roumania was an obvious ally: her intervention, as we shall see, has already gravely affected the course of the war—to Russia's disadvantage. And the problem of Bessarabia has still to be solved: we shall return to it again.

## v

Bessarabia had been part of the Russian domains for a total of about eighty years. Northern Bukovina, the other subject of the Soviet ultimatum, had never been Russian at all. Yet the Russian ethnic claim to Northern Bukovina was much stronger than that to Bessarabia!

Bukovina is a pleasant contrast to the Roumanian plains. The Austrians used to call it the "English land," and there is something reminiscent of Kent and Sussex in its rolling valleys and well wooded countryside.

A thousand years ago Bukovina was largely inhabited by Ukrainians. Then Roumanians, pressed by successive Turkish invasions, moved northwards—the ancient capital of the Moldavian principality, Suseava, is in Bukovina, but for four hundred years the district was under Turkish rule. The province was seized by Austria from Turkey in 1774, and remained part of the Austrian Empire until 1918. A considerable German colony was settled there.

On the defeat of Austria-Hungary, the last Austrian governor

handed the province over to local Ukrainian leaders (October 25, 1918). But then, four days later, local Roumanians met at Cernowitz and voted for union with Roumania. They had the potential backing of the Roumanian army: the Ukrainians had none—not even the prestige of a national state. So Bukovina became Roumanian. At that time its population consisted of:

Ukrainians	305,000	Poles	36,000
Roumanians	273,000	Hungarians	10,000
Germans	168,000	Others	12,000
Jews	130,000		

It will be seen that the Ukrainians form the largest section of a very mixed population.

Today the Ukrainian section of the population is largely concentrated in the northern portion of the province, and here it heavily outnumbers all other races. It has resisted all attempts at Roumanization. Under the comparatively mild Austrian administration there were over two hundred Ukrainian schools in Bukovina. The Roumanians closed these, and Ukrainian children had to learn their lessons in Roumanian. Nevertheless their culture was kept alive: it is ranked among the finest and most tenacious of Eastern Europe. Its folk-lore and music are deservedly famous. For many centuries this district had existed without schools at all—the Turks did not believe in education for subject peoples: so the Ukrainian peasantry provided mental food for their children at home. Here was kept alive the wonderful Ukrainian folk-cultural legacy. The Uniat Church was the principal cultural and racial unifying organization.

In this I found the basis of the potential Russian difficulty in Bukovina. The Ukrainian peasants did not pretend to be happy under Roumanian rule—martial law was in force until 1928: they strongly favoured union with their brothers over the Polish and Russian borders, but were very suspicious of the anti-religious activities of the Soviet. In Roumania, despite the petty tyranny of local officials and the submergence of local tongues, at least the Ukrainians had religious liberty.

Taken by and large, the frontier established by the Russians in Bukovina in June, 1940, corresponds approximately with the line of ethnographical division. The area taken over housed a mixed people, of whom the large majority were Ukrainians. No plebiscite was held, but my own opinion is that in spite of the religious difficulty the majority of Ukrainians would have voted for incorporation with their own people.

Northern Bukovina, therefore, differs considerably from the problem of Bessarabia. In the latter Roumanians formed an easy majority: Russian and Ukrainian settlements were large in the southern and north-eastern corners, but ethnically the claim to the province was not very strong. It is probable that the Russian move was prompted largely by strategic considerations. In strategy, however, the most obvious course does not always yield the most effective results.

## VI

The results of the Russian move were far-reaching. All hopes of Balkan unity disappeared: we have noted that Hungary and Bulgaria hastened to press their own territorial claims, and more provinces were torn from Roumania's frontiers. Already Nazi activity in the country was intense: now the Germans presented themselves openly as protectors. The options open to the Roumanian government were not many. Greece and Yugoslavia were to show that small countries were helpless against the German might. Britain was quite unable to help—indeed, appeared likely to be beaten. There were strong suspicions that the appetite of Russia was not yet satiated—added to keen resentment of the seizure of Bessarabia. Was the province to serve as a pretext like Sudetenland? There was a strong Fascist element in Roumanian politics. Nevertheless, it is improbable that the Roumanian government moved into the Axis camp of its own free will: it was driven there by events over which it had little or no control.

Nor was suspicion of Russia confined to the Roumanians. At

this stage it is necessary to emphasize one important point: that in Eastern Europe the Russians are regarded as Russians. In Britain (and, I think, in the United States) our outlook is—or used to be—largely political: we condemned or vaunted the Russians not on national grounds, but according to our political persuasions. In the Balkans Stalin is regarded as the heir to the power of the tsars: any Russian encroachments of territory do not appear as the result of a desire to spread the blessings of communism abroad—an objective specifically denounced by Stalin—but as Russian imperialism, a continuation of older Tsarist policy. This view may be wrong, but it is very widely held.

The occupation of Bessarabia brought the Russian frontier to the Danube. Would it halt there? If it moved only another hundred miles to the south, there would be a common boundary with Bulgaria, whose ties of sentiment and kinship with Russia were well known. Did Soviet ambitions embrace Bulgaria? If so, they were scarcely likely to halt short of the entire Balkan peninsula. Many uneasy thoughts were aroused—for there were large numbers of men who had no quarrel with Russian social policy, but who did not wish to become Soviet citizens. Balkan apprehension was to have significant results.

The Roumanian resentment was not confined to thoughts of Bessarabia: Balkan peoples are keen politicians, and ordinary peasants realized full well that the territorial losses to Bulgaria and Hungary followed Bessarabia. Further, they appreciated that Balkan unity, which had never appeared so strong as in the spring of 1940, was now shattered; and that the war they had paid a high price to avoid might now devastate their country.

Thus, when the Germans attacked Russia in June, 1941, it was not difficult to arouse some enthusiasm in Roumania. The country would probably have been forced into war in any case, for German troops were in occupation, and General Antonescu, the Roumanian "dictator," was little more than an Axis-controlled puppet. Yet a government can declare war, without being able to force its people to fight. The national pride of the Roumanians had been deeply hurt, however: it was not difficult to

rouse them to the recovery of what they fervently believed was their national territory.

In the uncontrolled excitement of war, jingoes flourish. The Russian calculation that the Pruth would be of value as a strategic frontier was proved an error, and Bessarabia was rapidly evacuated. The Roumanians marched into their province with joy—and with some gratitude to the Germans for making the restoration possible.

The Roumanian peasant army would willingly have halted once it had recovered its own. But its German masters had other ideas: they were aided by local Fascists—and, ironically enough, by Russian policy. We have seen that the Russians had formed the territory east of the Dniester into a Moldavian Soviet Republic. The very use of the ancient Roumanian name implied that it was a Roumanian province—though actually the majority population was overwhelmingly Ukrainian. Basing their arguments on the Russian designation of the area, not only Fascists but fervent Nationalists preached a crusade for the “rescue” of Roumanians groaning under the Bolshevik yoke!

This crusade found few adherents. The Roumanian peasant did not want martial adventure: he had recovered what he had lost—let him hold it and no more. The wildest oratory of the Fascists failed to move him. The Germans went to surprising lengths to spur his enthusiasm, with little success. The Roumanian general, Cuiperca, appreciating the mood of his men, refused to go beyond the Dniester: he was immediately dismissed and narrowly escaped summary execution. The Chief of the Roumanian General Staff conveniently died in one of these aeroplane “accidents” which the Germans have utilized at opportune moments.

By brigading German units with Roumanian—and with the menace of German machine-guns in the rear—the advance was resumed. Then the Germans essayed a territorial bribe. The Moldavian Soviet Republic, rapidly overrun, was formed into the province of Transdnistria, and handed over to Roumania. Ancient historical records were cited to prove that the area had once been



Roumanian—which was true, but its ethnic character had completely changed in recent centuries. As a final inducement, the Germans offered “the pure Roumanian city” of Odessa. This was fantastic: the only Roumanians to see Odessa were those who fled there as refugees during the last war.

The man in control is the man with the power. Roumanian peasants could not be excited to a false crusade, or led into imperialist adventure, but they could be driven. Opportunity of resistance was small: it is difficult to revolt against overwhelming force. Because the bulk of the Roumanian army marched without enthusiasm, its losses were the more severe. It was callously used by the Germans, especially in the battles before Odessa. Ill-equipped, badly officered, it had to take the first shock of battle, to wear down the keen Russian resistance so that the Germans might make the final assault on a tired opponent. Its casualties were appalling: it says something for the courage of the Roumanian peasant that he remained in the field.

Even a non-politically minded people can distinguish between a war of defence and a war of aggression. Roumanians who had vigorously approved the recovery of Bessarabia surveyed without pride the march of their armies on to Russian soil. The heavy losses acted like a cold douche on the enthusiasm of the more volatile people. Nevertheless the argument was forcefully urged that the total defeat of Russia was essential: otherwise she would return to Bessarabia. In any case, the Germans were masters in Roumania. Yet discontent smouldered. The British resistance against great odds was admired. Events in North Africa revived the sentimental affection for France; already the entry of the United States into the war had had profound effects. This appeared to be a war of material, and American resources were immense. In most Balkan villages there is a returned emigrant from America; many families have relatives there; and all preach the vast power of the United States. At any time in 1942, had Russia agreed to the restoration of Bessarabia, and had Britain and the United States offered guarantees, then Roumania would have been out of the war. It would have been worth the effort. The

Roumanians are ranged with our enemies. If the Russians in battle wipe out half a dozen Roumanian divisions, we offer our warm congratulations. But if, by political action, we could detach the whole of the Roumanian army, then this is a bigger victory.

The Italian surrender may prove to be a useful precedent. Immediately it had wide effects in Roumania—the surrender was correctly interpreted not merely as a collapse of Italian resistance, but as a failure of Italian belief that the Axis would win the war. As most Roumanians were anti-Axis—even those who were also anti-Russian—the effects were profound. Nor were Antonescu and his friends as confident as they pretended. Even before the Italian collapse they had thrown out hints that they were prepared to compromise on the Bessarabian issue: the suggestion was a division of the province according to its ethnic composition. The moment was inopportune, for the Russians were winning considerable victories; they appreciated the lack of enthusiasm among the Roumanian people, and were in no mood to talk of compromise. But the suggestion may yet be revived.

Even before the Italian collapse public opinion in Roumania was having its effects—as it must, even in a dictatorship state. The Roumanian people had suffered over half a million casualties in a war not of their seeking; their German masters called for further sacrifices. Yet Antonescu knew that he could drive his unwilling people no further: on the contrary, he was insistent on retreat. In the spring of 1943 the bulk of the Roumanian army was withdrawn from the Russian front, leaving only token forces behind. The way was open to an elimination of Roumania from the war; the opportunity was missed, but is likely to recur. The Roumanians are peasants: all they need is a reasonable chance to return to their fields.

Hitherto, lack of Allied political unity in political fields has prevented us from seizing advantageous opportunities. Every opinion agrees that Roumania could have been hustled out of the war within forty-eight hours of the Italian collapse—had Britain, the United States, and Russia been ready with agreed terms. The Germans at least saw the danger, and by their policy of violent re-

pression in Italy sought to persuade their satellites that it did not pay to desert the Reich. If they did, their leaders would be shot, their peasants massacred, and their country become a battleground, devastated. And, even if the Germans were eventually driven out, what would happen when the Russians marched in? By playing on such fears the Roumanian leaders persuaded themselves and their people to stay in the fight a little longer.

## VII

Before considering potential solutions to the vexed problem of Bessarabia, we must turn to another point of difficulty in Roumania—the situation of the Jews. It ought not to be a problem, but it is.

Anti-Semitic feeling in Roumania is not solely due to modern Fascist propaganda activities. It is of long standing. When I interviewed the aged Professor Cuza at Jassy in 1937, he showed me a newspaper report of a speech he made forty years ago: his anti-Jewish sentiments might have served as a text for Hitler's fulminations.

Until 1878 Jews were officially classed as foreign outcasts in Roumania. The constitution of 1866 read: "Only Christians can become citizens of Roumania." That is to say, Jews had no civil rights. The situation was rectified under the pressure of the Great Powers, but the prejudice remained.

In all peasant countries of Eastern Europe there is a tendency towards anti-Semitic opinion. (For that matter, it is not unknown in every other country, including Britain.) In Roumania it attained a higher degree of development than in other Balkan states, largely because of the greater number of Jews. Of Roumania's total population of 20,000,000, approximately 800,000 are Jews.

(This figure is disputed by the local Fascists. It is the total of Jews practising the Mosaic faith. In addition, it is claimed, there are tens of thousands of ethnic Jews who are Christians or who have no religion at all. Cuza's estimate, freely quoted, was 1,400,-

ooo Jews in Roumania, but this is far too high: it was probably based on Nuremberg calculations, and included hundreds of thousands of part-Jews.)

The Jews in Roumania are of two types. Some are members of families which have been settled in the country for many centuries: they have often played important parts in Roumanian affairs, and have freely intermarried with local races. Many others, however, are the descendants of Jewish families driven from Russia by the vicious pogroms of Tsarist days. General Antonescu and his friends imitate their German master and class all Jews as their despicable enemies. Moderate Roumanian opinion, however, makes a clear distinction: it holds that the Roumanian Jews are entitled to all rights of citizenship, without bias or animus—they are indeed termed not as Jews, but as "Roumanians of the Mosaic Confession." The Russian Jews, on the other hand, are held to be foreigners, with no traditional obligations to Roumania. For these, it is argued, another home must be found: Roumania cannot possibly absorb such a large number; they are not agriculturists, but traders, and Roumanian commerce is already staffed by Jews whose roots are deep in their land.

The peasant outlook is much more local. For many generations the Jews held almost a monopoly of trade—some of the market towns, indeed, house a Jewish majority. In the village the Jew is even more important: usually the one village shop is owned by a Jew. Generally he runs it with the genius of his race for trade: I was often amazed at the range of goods carried, and at the natural financial aptitude of the owner.

Now when the estates of the great landlords were broken up, the peasants rejoiced in the possession of their own plots of land, the fulfilment of their dreams. They overlooked many economic difficulties. The landlord had provided tools and seed; he had to sustain his men during periods of bad harvest. Now the peasant had to look after himself.

He had his land, he had his labour, but he needed a modest capital. Until recently there was no one to whom he could apply but the local Jewish shopkeeper. Implements and seeds were

supplied on credit, loans were advanced at interest. Then world conditions made difficult the marketing of the peasant's produce: he could feed his family, but could not pay off his debt to the Jew.

The result was inevitable though illogical. He tended to look upon the Jew as the cause of all his misfortunes; anti-Semitic arguments appeared reasonable to him: if the village Jew were exiled, then his debt was automatically cancelled, so it seemed. Throughout history the Jew has been an ideal target for the direction of hatred. Any inefficient government can blame the country's woes upon him: indeed, by the revival of his nationalistic spirit he has contributed to his own discomfiture. Morton's Fork prongs him. If Palestine is his national home, chant his enemies, then he must go to Palestine. If he is not a nationalist, he can demand no minority rights since he claims that he is not a minority.

Though the peasant complaints demanded a heavy discount, there were local grounds for discontent. The maximum rate of interest fixed by the government was 9 per cent, but village Jews often charged 35 per cent—sometimes more. One man was reputed to have seventy villages in economic thralldom. The ways of moneylenders were not unknown or popular in Britain before regulation was applied. A Roumanian peasant borrowed 50,000 lei, paid 60,000 back in interest, and still owed the original sum! It was bad enough if the debt had been incurred to provide seed or stock; but if a bad harvest had forced the peasant to borrow in order to pay his taxes, his indignation can be imagined. It was easy to direct it all against the Jew.

There were Jews who used their financial capacity and resources unfairly, but the business of most was legitimate enough. Yet distortion is easy where finance is involved. Few people are insensible to arguments which affect their own interests. The Roumanian peasant is a kindly man—he was disgusted by the Fascist massacres of the Jews in his country in January, 1941. But he makes no pretence of love for the local Jewish financier.

For that matter, had not the war intervened, the village money-lender might have found his occupation gone. Even Roumania had seen the beginnings of an extensive system of state loan facilities. The ultimate objective was an application of the co-operative agricultural systems which have been so beneficial in Scandinavia. By 1939, nearly five thousand rural banks and co-operatives were in operation. Unfortunately, their financial resources were completely inadequate. Money being scarce, rates of interest were high. The Jew was losing his commanding position, but the peasant was not yet much better off. Agricultural reserves were so low that, when Bessarabia experienced a bad harvest in 1927, food and seeds actually had to be imported into this fertile agricultural province: the peasants never fully recovered from the consequent financial burden, which caused great disasters and discontent. Peasants dislike central governments, and hold them responsible for everything—even weather and bad harvests.

In a previous book I advanced one idea for the solution of the Bessarabian problem which at first aroused opposition from all parties concerned. Later reactions were much more favourable.

We have seen that there is already a considerable Jewish element in Bessarabia: 50 per cent of the population of Chishinev, the Bessarabian capital, was Jewish; another 25 per cent consisted of troops and officials. Thus the city was very much of a Jewish character. Indeed, in Tsarist days it had been the scene of shocking pogroms. In all the country towns of the province the Jews were well represented.

I suggested the formation of Bessarabia into a Jewish state. Russian and Ukrainian peasants could be withdrawn into Soviet territory, Roumanians into Roumania. The number of Jews in Roumania would not suffice to populate the whole of Bessarabia: in any case, thousands of Roumanian Jewish families of long standing would remain in their own country—Roumanian commerce, professions, and culture would be hard-hit by their removal; but there are likely to be hundreds of thousands of Jews in Central Europe who will require alternative accommodation.

The scheme need not clash with Zionist aspirations, for in no circumstances could Palestine ever suffice to support the large numbers of Jews who would like to settle there.

Such a scheme would probably meet with opposition from the Roumanian Jews who have lived exclusively by trade. Nevertheless, most of them would agree that their lot has been unhappy for many years; and, in spite of their capacity for withstanding oppression and suffering, they would admit that the future is not bright, even in the democratic Roumania which should emerge from the war.

A strong Jewish objection would be that Bessarabia could only absorb a fraction of the Roumanian Jews in the professional or commercial callings they have previously followed. This is true: the bulk of the Bessarabian settlers must be farmers, but it is an elementary error to assume that the Jew cannot be a first-class agriculturalist. On the contrary, he was noted for his skill on the land three thousand years ago; in Palestine today he has shown that this ancient quality has only lain dormant, and has not died. There are districts in Sub-Carpathian Russia, or Ruthenia, where all the inhabitants are Jews—not merely the traders, but the foresters and peasant farmers. The Russians faced the problem after 1918: the Soviets housed millions of Jews, mostly engaged in the kind of individualistic commerce which was to be suppressed. They were successfully diverted into industry and agriculture. A strong Jewish settlement in Bessarabia is not a fanciful suggestion: the land can support a considerable population, and urban and industrial development would afford full opportunities for the organizing genius of the race.

A Jewish Bessarabia would not be an independent state, but would have local self-government. It would affiliate either with Roumania or with Russia. The decision would be strongly influenced by the trend of anti-Semitic feeling in Roumania, which will not subside in a day. My own impression is that the answer to a Jewish plebiscite would probably be Russia—certainly if Roumania's present rulers continue much longer in power. It was significant that, as the Russians marched into Bessarabia, thousands

of Jews from Roumania rushed to get over the river Pruth, so as to be caught up in the Russian occupation!

## VIII

The alternative to this scheme, assuming that a solution is not to be imposed by force, must essentially be a compromise. As a strategic frontier, the Pruth is no better than the Dniester; economically, the province is vital neither to Russia nor to Roumania.

The obvious suggestion is a free plebiscite of the population, reproducing as far as is practicable the conditions of 1939. This will not be easy: the Russians removed many of the leading Roumanians during the brief occupation: the Roumanians reversed the process later. Nevertheless it is essential, if our aim is to implement the promises of the Atlantic Charter, to endeavour to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants.

If the voting followed ethnic distribution, the Russians would be allocated a considerable area in the north-east, adjoining Bukovina, and a second large area in the south. Economic conditions are so primitive that their disturbance could be easily compensated. Straggling groups of Russian or Roumanian peasants who found themselves on the wrong side of the frontier could be exchanged.

Indeed, if the ethnic principle is sincerely invoked, and if both parties would agree to transfer of populations as a final settlement, there are more than enough Roumanians in Russia to exchange for the people of Slav stock in Bessarabia. Then the original frontier of 1939 would still stand.

Any solution depends very largely upon a spirit of confidence between Russia and Roumania. At present it is folly to pretend that this exists; nor will it be born and matured in a day. It is easier to talk about forgiving and forgetting than to achieve them: both parties to the dispute sincerely believe that they have been wronged. Such a quarrel can only be composed by the beneficent influence of friends.



## IX

On a wall of my study hangs a cross, roughly carved and crudely painted. The figure of Christ might be called a travesty but for the sincerity of the peasant who painted it. This figure is flanked by those of the Archangel Gabriel and John the Baptist; above him hovers a bird, somewhat resembling a duck, supposed to represent the Holy Ghost; on the reverse side appear Mary and Mary Magdalen. The cross is very old and is completely inartistic: but every time I glance at it I must think of Transylvania.

I had halted for the night in one of the high valleys of the Carpathians, far away from any road. There was no inn at the village, but that did not matter—the first peasant hailed me into his cottage. After dark he threw a heavy log bar across the door, and hung thorns about it. Garlic and religious emblems were freely scattered about the primitive home. The peasant confessed his fears: there was a vampire abroad in the village, sucking the blood of the girls and children: the thorns were to catch his shroud should he enter the cottage.

The peasant proposed to sit up to guard his family, and I volunteered to stay with him. But the vampire did not appear. Tired, I lay down on the floor and slept. In the morning I woke abruptly; something cold was touching my throat: not the teeth of a vampire, but a wooden cross, placed there by my peasant host to protect me from evil. He was so convinced of its efficacy that he insisted that it should accompany me on my journey.

Transylvania is Europe's last resort of the vampire legend—still implicitly believed by thousands of people. I have seen suicides' graves piled high with thorns, to deter them from their traditional egress. In one Carpathian village there lived an old woman who had a local reputation as a witch. Before she died, she threatened to come back and haunt the village. The elders gathered, and decided to take traditional precautions: they cut off the head of the dead woman, stuffed her mouth with garlic, and stuck a stake through her heart. Then they argued: "Maybe, because she was a witch, she can defy all these things. But, if she

does return, at least we will hear her coming." So they nailed iron horseshoes to her dead feet. This actually happened, not in the dark days of the Middle Ages, but in the year of grace 1933.

Peasants told me stories of werewolves, and obviously believed them. Long isolation from centres of thought may explain these primitive survivals of magical folklore. I asked a Roumanian to explain the existence of vampires and werewolves. "I cannot. I do not understand," he said. "But then, every year I plant seeds and they grow—I don't understand that either."

Coupled with superstition is a trait of native artistry. I saw a Transylvanian funeral: the coffin lay open by the graveside. The friends of the dead man passed beside it—taking very great care that their shadow should not fall into the grave and be stolen from them. Then the widow, who could not read or write, sank on her knees beside the coffin, sobbing. Gradually her grief changed into a torrent of words—it was as if she were in a trance. This illiterate woman produced in her sorrow a flow of pure natural poetry, with exquisite and delicate ideas of emotion and love.

Yet I should be suggesting a very incorrect picture of Transylvania were I to present it as a primitive land. In its isolated valleys strange superstitions survive—as they do in Britain, with less cause!—but the general standard of life and thought is actually higher than in the Old Kingdom of Roumania. That there is little happiness in the province is due to the follies of man rather than to the vagaries of Nature.

Transylvania ought to be happy, for it is a lovely land. It forms a plateau, roughly circular: the mountains at its western fringe are modest enough, but the eastern boundary is the great sweep of the Carpathians. Here are valleys of breathless beauty: more than once I have sat in their green depths or on the passes above, almost overcome with sheer emotion at the loveliness about me. Even its name is intriguing, for Transylvania means "beyond the woods."

It is a land of colour. Its medley of races have retained their picturesque costumes, and the drab process of Westernization is happily slow. On any day its villages are colourful, and on a Sunday evening the scene rivals the plains of Hungary.

There are unimportant industries and coal mines, but Transylvania lives up to its name, and is a pastoral land. The wide valleys are fertile, and the mountain slopes offer grazing for millions of sheep. The great landlord has now almost disappeared, exterminated by the expropriation laws; "intellectuals" are comparatively few in a land where a generation ago 60 per cent of the people were illiterate. Transylvania is a peasant land. It is a fascinating if complex ethnic study, difficult to assess because of the fierce passions of the conflicting races: but the student of ancient folklore and survivals will find it unsurpassed in Europe. Scenically its charm is beyond all words but those of a poet. If Roumania were a happier country, and if Transylvania were more accessible, it might easily become one of the show places of Europe.

It was part of the Roman province of Dacia. When the Romans withdrew, they may have left behind a Romanized population; but the next mention of Transylvanian history is of a population of Vlach shepherds. The Magyars overran the district in 1003; the indigenous inhabitants were "adopted" as serfs, but strong bodies of settlers were sent to guard the Carpathian frontiers. To the south-east were planted the Szeklers, a Magyar tribe. (Although the Szeklers are now claimed as Magyars, Hungarian historians of bygone generations derided this claim, and declared that they were the descendants of the Huns. If so, they are thoroughly Magyarized and are generally in the forefront of the clamour for reunion with Hungary. For political purposes, therefore, they should be classed as Magyars.) Farther north were German colonists.

For five hundred years Transylvania was a Hungarian province, though with wide powers of self-government. Then, when the Turks overran Hungary, it became an independent state—and thousands more Hungarians fled thither for refuge. The defeat of the Turks before Vienna in 1685 eventually brought it under Austria; there were frequent clashes between the many divisions of the population—first, peasants against overlords, irrespective of nationality, then Germans and Roumanians against Magyars. In

1868 Transylvania was placed by the Empire under Hungarian rule, and attempts were made to Magyarize the Roumanian peasants. In Roumania proper the people looked across the mountains with sympathetic interest. Transylvania had been described as the cradle of the Roumanian race: here, during the centuries of Turkish oppression, the Latin tradition was never extinguished; here Roumanians sheltered from the blast of war, to return to the plains in times of peace. An official account, published as late as September, 1940, read: "It is there that the first light was kindled, that the warm love of our country, the consciousness of our national unity, the sentiment of freedom and honour were born. It is the men of Transylvania who made these revolutions for social justice, national freedom, and the union of all Roumanians. The graves of our martyrs are there in Transylvania, our first libraries, the cradles of our first political organization."

The Hungarians deride this claim. They declare that there were no Roumanians in Transylvania prior to the Magyar conquest. Then, when the Turks conquered Moldavia and Wallachia, the Roumanians sought and found sanctuary in Christian Transylvania. They bred more rapidly than their hosts and now outnumber them. Because of this, the Roumanians claim that they should possess the land which in Christian charity gave them shelter from the infidel oppressor!

It was from 1848 that the real quarrel between Hungarians and Roumanians can be traced. Until that time the Roumanians were peasant farm labourers—almost serfs. (The historic social divisions followed nationalities: the Magyars were the landlords and warriors, Germans the traders, Roumanians the peasants.) In 1848 the eddies of revolutionary thought swept even conservative Hungary: liberal and democratic ideas were freely proclaimed. A new constitution was adopted for Transylvania—but it was held that the Roumanians were too backward for a share in democracy. The franchise was based on property and educational qualifications, and the Roumanians found themselves still without representation. They had absorbed some of the spirit of democratic ideas, and were bitterly disappointed and disillusioned.

It might be true that the Roumanians were unfit for a share in government, but they have a legitimate complaint in that the Hungarians took no steps to fit them for it. The Magyars tend to live in the past: the Roumanians had always been peasants—no Magyar could envisage anything different. This outlook was not firmly based: there were Roumanian landlords as well as Hungarian—and most of them had accepted the new régime and became Magyarized so as to preserve their property. Some of them attained high rank in Hungarian annals—John Hunyadi,



THE BREAK-UP OF HUNGARY, 1918.

one of the heroes of the Hungarian fight against the Turks, was actually of Roumanian origin: but the Roumanian gentry attained their high ranks as Magyars, not Roumanians. It was the village priest who kept alive the racial culture, for the Roumanians follow the Orthodox rites and the Magyars the Roman Catholic: again, in this region, a man's religion was often and wrongly accepted as a proof of his race. In the peasant cottages old memories never died: men dreamed of their ambition—they were not nationalist enough to demand political independence, but dreamed of a land of their own. The establishment of a free

Roumania on the other side of the mountains acted as a spur to wider ideas.

Nevertheless in the decades prior to 1914 all patriotic and nationalistic aspirations were sternly discouraged by the Roumanian government—which was allied to Austria-Hungary! Not until the end of the war was it possible for the people of Transylvania to attempt any expression of their own wishes. As the Austro-Hungarian Empire crumbled, the Roumanians of Transylvania naturally declared for union with their brothers beyond the Carpathians. The Saxons, in January, 1919, agreed to join the new "Great Roumania." This decision was sensible enough. It was quite impossible for them to form a kingdom of their own, scattered as they were, and they were hopelessly isolated from any other considerable branch of their own kin. The German settlers in the Balkans had always been loyal to the régime of the day; they were workers and traders, not politicians, and as soon as it became obvious that Transylvania was to be allocated to Roumania, they accepted the situation with excellent grace. The Magyars, naturally, did not.

For the historic and sentimental importance of Transylvania was as strongly impressed in Hungary as in Roumania. During the Turkish occupation of Hungary proper, this was the province where Magyar as well as Roumanian culture was kept alive. Hence came most of the Magyar heroes of the liberation: the province has played a stirring and leading part in Hungarian history.

The ethnic medley is amazing. The population includes:

Roumanians . . . . .	1,876,000
Magyars . . . . .	998,000
Germans . . . . .	248,000
Jews . . . . .	52,000
Gypsies . . . . .	30,000
Others (Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgars, Czechs, Slovaks) .	14,000

These are official Roumanian figures assessed in 1936. The Hungarians claim that the proportion of Roumanians is exaggerated. This may be true, but it is also a fact that thousands of

Magyarized Roumanians have reverted to their original racial group since 1918.

The Hungarian official statistics for 1910 perhaps offer a fairer guide:

Roumanians	1,472,000	Gypsies	25,000
Magyars	918,000	Others	15,000
Germans	234,000		

Thus for once there is no statistical argument. If Transylvania is to be considered as a whole, the Roumanians are in a considerable majority and always have been.

The figures above are for Transylvania proper—there are in addition hundreds of thousands of Magyars in districts just inside the Roumanian frontier. Tens of thousands more are scattered in isolated groups all over Transylvania, especially in the towns. But in the east there remains a considerable homogeneous block, occupying substantially the same territory as the original Szekler settlers. The exact limits of this Magyar “island” need not concern us here: according to their drawing, wide or near, they would enclose anything from half a million to three-quarters of a million Magyars. The indisputable fact is that there is a considerable area of Transylvania which is Magyar—not merely housing a majority of Magyars, but almost entirely Magyar: in some parts the Magyars form over 90 per cent of the population—a remarkable proportion in such a racially mixed land. And this Magyar “island” is separated from Hungary by a wide stretch of territory which is predominantly Roumanian.

Until 1918, then, the Magyars were masters in Transylvania. They treated the peasant Roumanians as members of an inferior race. The Hungarians are perhaps the most charming people in Europe, but it cannot be said that they have proved born rulers of subject peoples. Feudal conditions of “benevolent despotism” have prevailed, the degree of benevolence varying with the character of the local despots. In fairness it should be stated that these gentlemen differentiated only slightly between their treatment of Roumanians and their own Magyar peasants.

For many years an intense policy of Magyarization was pursued in Transylvania—any Roumanian who wanted to get on had to make his progress in Magyar pattern and language. The state schools were entirely Magyar: challenged at the Peace Conference of 1919, the Hungarian delegation was unable to mention a solitary state school where instruction was given in Roumanian (or, for that matter, in Slovak or any other non-Magyar tongue, except German).

The Hungarian case was that their culture was higher than that of their subject nationalities, so that it was Hungary's duty to draw them up to her level—which could only be done by Magyarizing them. There were, of course, local Roumanian schools either run by the Church or paid for by the peasants direct. As they lived on the edge of poverty, these could scarcely afford to pay out considerable sums for the education of their children. Thus they had to choose between education in Magyar and no education at all. Most of them chose none, and in 1914 no less than 78 per cent of the Roumanian population of Transylvania was illiterate. (Even then, it is important to note, the level of culture and education among the Roumanians of Transylvania was higher than that of their brothers in the Old Kingdom of Roumania, so recently under Turkish rule.)

The political system of Hungary resembled that of England before the Reform Bill. Only 6 per cent of the entire population voted, and of the Roumanians only 3.2 per cent had the franchise. Nor could they vote with freedom, for the open ballot had always been favoured in Hungary. It was a brave man in those days who would vote against his feudal landlord.

Roumanian parliamentary representation was a farce. The maximum number of delegates was 5—whereas by proportion of population the number should have been 120. The Roumanian press was maltreated, and frequently suppressed.

(I should emphasize that I am here summarizing the more moderate of the Roumanian complaints. Actually, Magyar Socialist papers were freely suppressed as well by the old régime.)

After 1919 the picture was reversed. Passing to the districts of



Transylvania preponderantly occupied by Magyars, I found another set of complaints. The Magyars claimed that they were facing a complete policy of Roumanization—the minority clauses of the Peace Treaty were largely ignored. Street signs had all been changed from Magyar to Roumanian—and if a letter were addressed in the Magyar style it might not arrive: the street is “not known.” Roumanian was exclusively used by the railways and post office, and the policy was being introduced into state schools. The national cultural activities of the Magyars were repressed—even Hungarian songs and dances were discouraged! It was not permitted to import political Magyar books from Hungary. Magyars were ill-treated by the police merely because they were Magyars. And no one in Britain can imagine what a hell can be made of life by an oppressive village policeman! When the great Magyar estates were expropriated, they were almost entirely divided among Roumanian peasants, the claims of the Magyars being ignored, it was alleged—not entirely correctly. Practically the whole of the Civil Service was Roumanian; and thousands of Magyars were dismissed. How could the Roumanians appoint men to official jobs when they openly admitted that their loyalty was to Hungary, not to Roumania? In the army, Magyar conscripts were drafted into labour units—“service without rifle,” for they could not be trusted with arms. Maybe the Roumanians were wise in their caution, even though it offended Hungarian pride. “I want to go into the army and be trained as a soldier,” declared a Transylvanian Magyar youth to me; “then, when war comes, I can slip over the frontier and fight for Hungary.”

There is a pathetic similarity between these two sets of complaints. Both have foundation, but are pathetic because they prove the utter lack of tolerance—which is the basis of most armchair settlements of European disputes, but seldom exists on the spot.

If a minority is to be happy, it must co-operate with the ruling power. The Magyars have never pretended to do this: on the contrary: The political argument was that co-operation would imply satisfaction with their lot, which they would never admit. So they preferred obstructive methods, putting up with dozens of

personal grievances so that Hungary should be able to claim with truth that her exiled sons were unhappy and yearned to return to the fatherland.

Culturally, at least, they were better off than the Roumanians were under Hungary. The majority of the Magyar schools were, however, run by the Church, and paid for by the Magyars direct. It is unfair that a man should pay a state education tax, and then pay a private education tax in addition. But it was also unfair in the days of Magyar domination.

The Magyar press was as free as any other in Roumania, which at any given moment may not have meant very much. Their cultural societies were very active, and their economic situation was at least higher than that of the neighbouring Roumanians. Nevertheless I felt exceedingly sorry for the Magyars of Transylvania. Irredentism seldom makes for happiness. Nor is it pleasant when tables are turned—for the man who goes under the table.

It is pertinent to remark that complaints were not confined to Magyars: local Roumanians had a lot to say. The central administration at Bucarest submerged many local privileges, and people of the plain have seldom known how to govern people of the mountain. As federal ideas developed in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, they spread into Roumania. Local patriotism was always strong in Transylvania, and there arose a considerable movement demanding federal home rule—not separation from Roumania, but self-government in local affairs. The movement was vigorously suppressed by the central government, but more may be heard of it.

On the other hand, some Transylvanian leaders adopted an opposite course. They were more "Western" than the men of the Old Kingdom, they claimed, and tried to "capture" the Bucarest government on their merits. They did not succeed, but Transylvania has always been very ably and forcibly represented in the capital.

Here, then, is a tangled problem—a lovely land claimed by two peoples. It is of intense historic and sentimental importance to

both. The two races are hopelessly scattered—the Magyar “island” complicates any proposed exchange of populations. There is a religious clash. And there is no trust or confidence between the two national states.

Before we face the problem, other vexed—and parallel—questions along its fringe should be outlined.

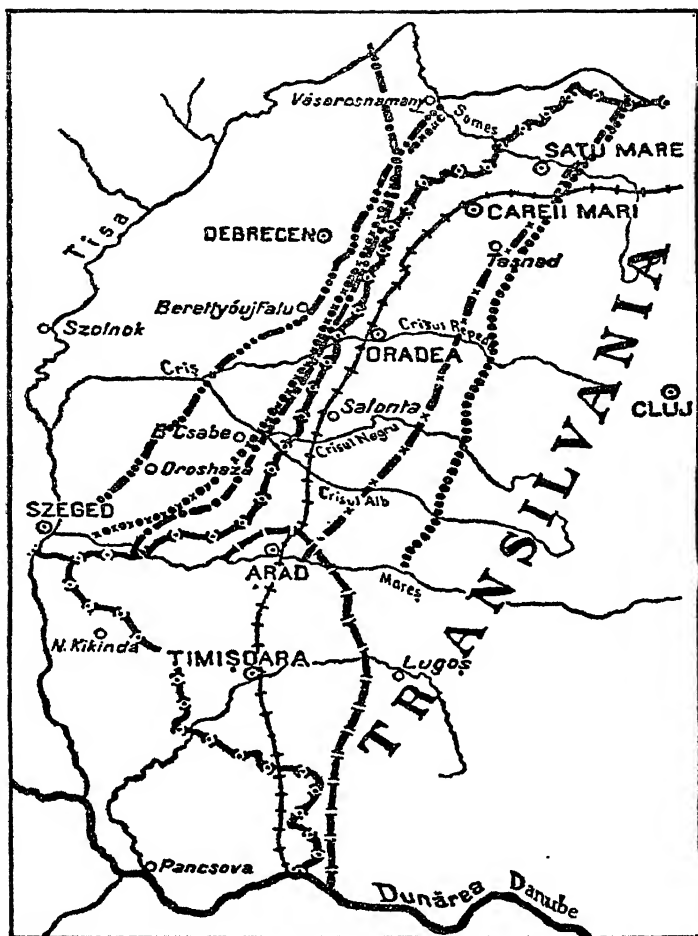
## X

Between Transylvania proper and Hungary lay three districts—from north to south, Maramures, Crişana, and the Banat. Their problems are comparable to the ethnic tangle of Transylvania, but are, fortunately, simpler.

Any Hungarian frontier was bound to be a matter of argument, for from a solid kernel of Magyars the racial density fades off to scattered groups and then to isolated landowners. It was human, if unfair, that the benefit of any doubt should go to the victors. Thus Roumania gained frontiers considerably beyond her ethnic limits. Why should Roumanians live under Hungarian rule? it was demanded. Were not the Allies fighting for freedom? Thus, a town with 10,000 Roumanians was given its freedom from Hungarian domination—though it might also have contained 15,000 Magyars.

The Roumanians first claimed the frontier line of the river Theiss (or Tisza); but this would have been grossly unfair to the Magyars and was refused. The final decision was not entirely based upon ethnic considerations. The Magyars, speaking generally, are a people of the plain: where the mountains begin, their predominance ends. But communications are easier across plains. If the frontier had followed an ethnic line, Transylvanian valleys would have been isolated, their economic life paralysed: nearly all vital roads and railways followed the plain. Thus, for economic reasons, Roumania was allocated a fringe of Hungarian territory containing a large Magyar population, and a further strip for strategic protection.

It was not continuous. The two districts of Maramures and Crişana contained 840,000 Roumanians and 378,000 Magyars, ac-



- ..... Frontier demanded by Rumania.
- ||||| Frontier demanded by Yugoslavia.
- xxxxxxx Frontier proposed by British experts.
- ..... Frontier proposed by French experts.
- xxx Frontier proposed by American experts.
- ..... Frontier proposed by Italian experts.
- Frontier fixed by Trianon Treaty.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE ROUMANIAN-HUNGARIAN FRONTIERS ARE ILLUSTRATED BY THIS MAP, WHICH SHOWS THE DEMANDS AND SUGGESTIONS CONSIDERED BY THE PEACE CONFERENCE IN 1919.

cording to a Roumanian census taken on a basis of mother-tongue. But immediately adjoining the Hungarian frontier were large numbers of Magyars who could have been restored to the rule of their kin without carrying with them substantial numbers of Roumanians. This case is obviously much simpler than that of the Magyar "island" in the eastern corner of Transylvania.

The Banat is much more difficult. Here is the ethnic freak of the Balkans—indeed, of Europe. It is very easy to identify the province on a coloured ethnic map, for it resembles a miniature patchwork quilt.

The early Magyar settlers were driven from the fertile fields of the Banat by Tartar raiders. Four hundreds years later, as the Turks pressed to the north, Serbian refugees appeared, but in 1552 the province was overrun by the Turks themselves. Not until 1718 was it recovered—by the Austrians. They found the Banat desolate and depopulated.

Maria Theresa undertook the rehabilitation of the province. Settlers were planted there, with special privileges allocated to frontier guardsmen: they were drawn from the Rhine provinces and Alsace, from Tyrol and Bavaria, from Croatia, Slovenia, and even Italy and Spain.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the settler's privileges, confirmed by succeeding rulers, the many races have retained their own characteristics to a remarkable degree. Once I passed through a succession of seven villages, inhabited by seven different races. On another occasion I found four races and *four religions* in one village. For two centuries they had lived at peace with one another. It is only recently that they have been taught that they should really have hated one another all the time.

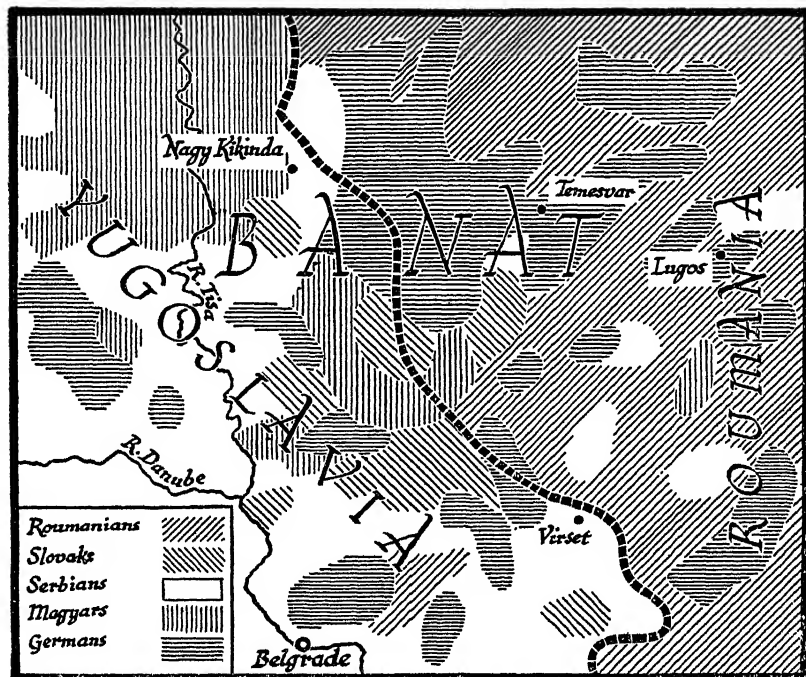
In 1919 both Roumania and Yugoslavia claimed the Banat—as also did the Magyars, of course. There was considerable friction,

<sup>1</sup> In 1919 the population figures for the Banat were:

Germans	330,000	Roumanians	270,000
Hungarians	230,000	Serbs	270,000

plus dozens of other racial groups ranging from a few hundreds to many thousands.

for the province is now rich again, and its standard of living is one of the highest in the Balkans. The powers at Paris eventually divided the province—two-thirds to Roumania, one-third to Yugoslavia: and none to Hungary.



THE RACIAL MEDLEY IN THE BANAT. THE SHADINGS MERELY SHOW RACIAL *majorities* IN EACH AREA—EVERY DISTRICT CONTAINS IMPORTANT MINORITIES OF SEVERAL OTHER RACES.

The situation in 1939, then, was that Roumania occupied the whole of Transylvania, Maramures, and Crişana, and two-thirds of the Banat. Ethnically Roumanians formed an easy majority. The figures for all four regions were:

Roumanians	3,237,000	Jews	111,000
Magyars	1,483,000	Others	176,000
Germans	543,000		

These were Roumanian figures of 1936—inevitably and vigorously denounced by her opponents. But, even allowing for prejudices, certain points were quite clear: (1) the Roumanians were in a considerable majority; (2) there were areas adjacent to the Hungarian frontier with a largely Magyar population; (3) there was a Magyar "Szekler" island in Transylvania, separated from Hungary by a district largely Roumanian.

Yet, before we take up the march of events and examine rival solutions of the difficult problem, one additional complication must be considered. Readers will have remarked that the proportion of Germans in the disputed areas is very high.

## XI

As if the ethnic medley of the Balkans were not sufficiently involved by the sporadic invasions of history, it received additional complications from the deliberate action of local monarchs, who invited Germans to settle in their domains. For many generations these Germans were an asset to their adopted countries: today they are a menace, and tomorrow they will still be a problem.

Settlement began in Hungary. The Magyar leaders were land-owners, with little interest in urban occupations: the Magyar peasants were serfs, bound to the land, forbidden to trade. German artisans found a ready livelihood in Hungarian towns; German and German-Jewish traders almost monopolized Hungarian commerce from the thirteenth century onwards. These townsmen gradually became Magyarized—a remarkable development which will call for further comment.

In Roumania, however, the situation was very different. Here the Germans settled not only as artisans and traders, but as peasants. Thousands of German families emigrated to Transylvania. Unfortunately for romance, the migration was not instigated in the fashion of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, but at the direct invitation of Hungarian monarchs. The Germans were colloquially termed "Saxons," but actually most of them came from the

Moselle valley and from Luxembourg. They were given special privileges of self-government in their own communities—their first charter was in 1224. This was in accordance with medieval practice: St. Stephen, King of Hungary, argued, "What Greek would rule Latins by Greek laws, or what Latin would rule Greeks by Latin laws?"

Although the passing generations have seen the persistent decline of German privileges, the descendants of the original settlers are still Germans, living in their own communities. They have maintained themselves as a race apart from their neighbours, whom they regard as their inferiors—for there is little new in the Nazi *Herrenvolk* theories. Differences in religion—the Transylvanian "Saxons" (miscalled, since most of their forefathers came from Western Germany) were Protestants—helped in the continuance of racial separation. Their standard of life and of education was and is considerably higher than that of their neighbours. They are hard workers: their farms are well kept and prosperous. When their rulers failed to provide roads to carry their produce to market, they built roads for themselves. They are better dressed than the other peoples about them—many of the picturesque German costumes have been retained. Their artisan workshops and local industrial plants are efficiently run. Their Lutheran zeal is as keen as the Roman Catholic or Orthodox faith of their neighbours—and their churches must surely be the most uncomfortable in Europe. And they never pretended to be anything but German. On the other hand, in spite of their adherence to their primitive master-race idea, the "Saxons" have always accepted the régime of the day, appreciating that they could demand no more than local self-government.

In pursuance of this practice, they accepted the Roumanian state on the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. During the frequent Roumanian-Hungarian disputes, their attitude was one of diplomatic aloofness. A representative German assembly in Transylvania declared that the Germans were neither the enemies nor the friends of the Hungarians. History had decided their fate, and it seemed that they could only return to



Hungary by violence, which they declined to consider. This was an eminently sensible point of view, typical of the history of these settlers. The "Saxons" gained by their moderation. They retained their own schools and local government; they enjoyed a comparative prosperity; they were as happy as any people in the Balkans—until the rise of Hitler.

The emphasis of the Nazi doctrine on race, and its encouragement of irredentism, had wide repercussions in Roumania. In one of his Reichstag speeches Hitler referred to South-eastern Europe as being "full of splinters of German nationality"—not of German race, it should be noted, but nationality. Actually the splinters numbered two million Germans or German-speaking people, and of these, three-quarters of a million were living in Roumania.

At first there was little enthusiasm among the "Saxons" for the Nazi creed. Then the inevitable "organization" began. Hitherto the German settlements in Roumania had been local, with linguistic and cultural affinities as bonds. Now they were welded into a political whole.

The original Nazi party in Roumania was banned, but in the fashion of the day it merely changed its name to the *Deutsche Volkspartei*. It is significant that the greatest opposition came from local German leaders, who saw how the new movement must upset their traditional mode of life. The younger generation, however, was swept off its feet, and since 1936 the Nazification of the "Saxons" has made violent strides.

Nevertheless the "Saxons" were much disturbed by Hitler's policy of mass transference of populations. They were deeply attached to their lovely homeland and had no wish to be moved to a strange Germany, or to be settled in a hostile Poland. The only Germans who accepted the new policy were some of those in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, who did not wish to remain under Russian rule. The majority of these were removed in the autumn of 1940. They have not been happy. After generations in one of Europe's backwaters, their development has been retarded, and they complain that their "brother" Germans in the Fatherland ostentatiously look down on them as inferior beings.

When Hitler attacked Russia, he sacrificed Roumanians freely, but deliberately left the German settlers on their farms. True, an appeal was made for volunteers, but it was not pressed. Indeed, out of three-quarters of a million Germans in Roumania only sixty-seven volunteered for the "crusade." It may be the German plan to kill off as many Roumanians as possible, while retaining the German population intact. More Machiavellian schemes than this have been seen during recent years.

After a German defeat, and in a new Roumania, the problem of the "Saxon" settlers will become acute. The Roumanians are not likely to look kindly on the Germans who abused the hospitality and privileges which Roumania gave for so many years, and who proved willing to act as a Fifth Column for a foreign power. If there is any place for Germans to go to, there will certainly be a demand in Roumania that they should be expelled from the land.

## XII

Such, then, was the troubled state of Roumania in 1938. True, Hungarian aspirations were held in check by the Little Entente, directed to this very end. When Czechoslovakia was broken, Roumanian anxiety became intense. However, Hungary pursued a very reasonable course, for she was as anxious to avoid the German war as any of her Balkan neighbours. While never abandoning her claims to Transylvania, she made it clear that she would postpone the issue until the end of the war. There is no doubt that this undertaking was given honourably.

We have already noted, however, that the Russian seizure of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in June, 1940, shattered the atmosphere of reason. If Roumania were to be dismembered, then Hungary must have her share—must move quickly, before a rival appeared. Who could tell whether Hitler would claim Transylvania as German territory? The population included 7.7 per cent of Germans: "Where there are Germans, there is German land," runs the Nazi creed.

For once even Hitler must have considered himself in an awkward dilemma. For years he had wooed and flattered Hungary,

fanning her revisionist aspirations. He had found an easy course there: its ruling clique was authoritarian long before Hitler attained power. The peasants had only a feeble voice—but even that was one of unanimous protest against the peace treaties and their consequences. Anybody who denounced the treaties was the friend of the Hungarians. (Because Lord Rothermere did so, there was a serious suggestion that he might be invited to become King of Hungary!) Hitler denounced them with a vigour that delighted Magyar pride, and many honourable men overlooked his crimes because he favoured the cause which was dear to their hearts. The adhesion of Italy to the German camp also prompted Hungarian collaboration, for the two countries had long been closely associated in religion—and, both being dissatisfied with their frontiers, spoke the same political language.

More recently, however, Hitler had been pushing Roumania away from her democratic obligations on to the Axis side, playing freely on her anti-Semitic proclivities and on her fears of Russian aggression, and especially upon economic domination, achieved by the same methods as prevailed in Bulgaria. Now both his protégés, Hungary and Roumania, appealed to him for protection against each other.

The Hungarian threat had certainly united Roumanians of all parties. Nevertheless, their country was weak and isolated, and it was obvious that compromise was necessary. Conversations with Hungary were opened at Turnu Severin in August, 1940. The Roumanians offered considerable cessions of territory in the Banat and Crişana districts, which would have returned approximately half a million Magyars to Hungarian rule. At the same time, an exchange of population was proposed: Roumanians should be withdrawn from the ceded districts, and replaced by Szeklers from the Transylvanian "island."

The flaw in the proposal lay in the fact that the number of Magyars to be settled far exceeded the number of Roumanians to be withdrawn. Nevertheless the offer was a reasonable basis for discussion. Indeed, had it been made five years earlier, in an atmosphere of peace and reason, it might have been accepted.

The negotiations broke down almost at once, for the Hungarians demanded the greater part of Transylvania, over 26,000 square miles: 2,200,000 Roumanians would thus have become Hungarian subjects. No Roumanian of any party could consider such an exorbitant claim for one moment. Hungarian troops began to mass on the frontier.

By this time the weakness of Roumania was apparent. Extreme elements in Hungary were dominant, and the moment of reason had passed. The dispute had to be referred to German "arbitration," and Ribbentrop made his award on August 30, 1940.

There was no argument; he dictated his orders at Vienna. I have a photographic copy of the map on which he hastily sketched the new frontier in heavy blue pencil. It paid little attention to ethnic or economic requirements, but was decided by strategic considerations. He allotted the northern half of Transylvania to Hungary—a tongue of land deliberately stretched to the east so as to enfold the Magyar "island."

Hungary gained 17,500 square miles, with a population of 2,370,000. Of these, 48 per cent were Magyars, 43 per cent Roumanians, 2.5 per cent Germans, and 6.5 per cent of other nationalities, according to Hungarian estimates. Roumanian figures, based on the census of 1930, are different and important:

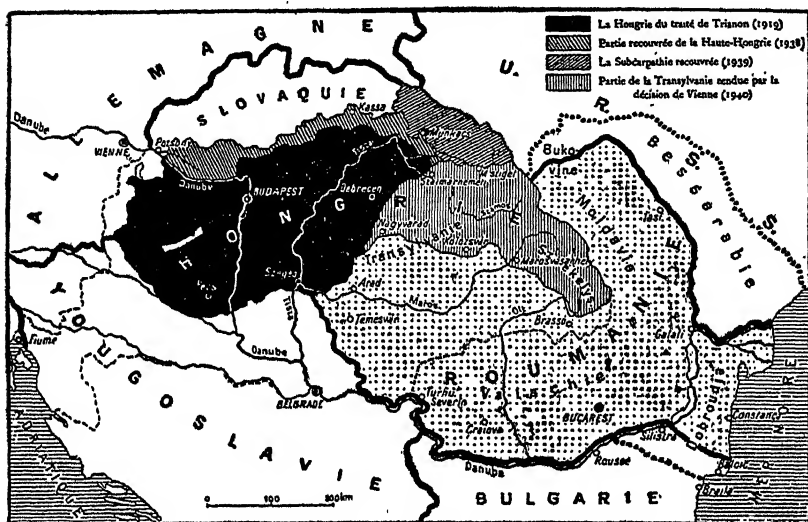
Roumanians	1,370,000	Jews	131,000
Magyars	893,000	Germans	66,000

The difference in the statistics is probably explained by the process of de-Magyarization followed since 1919. The Roumanian complaint is, therefore, that 893,000 Magyars have been returned to Hungary at a cost of 1,370,000 Roumanians; that, in order to restore the Szekler "island," the intervening areas with an overwhelming Roumanian population have been handed over to Hungary.

In ignoring the economic difficulties, Ribbentrop was obviously thinking in terms of German communications to the east, and of a new flanking frontier with Russia, destined to be useful at the moment of attack. Further, the Szekler "tongue" brought

a German satellite power within sixty miles of the Roumanian oil-fields at Ploesti!

Another feature of the Vienna "arbitration" deserves attention. Its lines may have been dictated to some extent by the "Saxon" reluctance to move. Although the "Saxons" form 7.7 per cent of the total population of Transylvania, the proportion in the area ceded to Hungary is only 2.5 per cent. This has the appearance of



PARTITION OF TRANSYLVANIA, 1941.

An official and accurate Hungarian map which shows the extension of Hungarian frontiers since 1938, and in particular the section of Transylvania seized from Roumania. The Szekler "island" is formed by the tip of the Hungarian tongue now extending south-east into Roumania: the population between this area and 1938 Hungary is largely Roumanian.

deliberate policy. Maybe Hitler plans to leave a large German population in the rump Roumania to justify a subsequent claim as German territory. Or it may be that he does not wish to transfer a large German population to Hungarian rule, for history has shown that the Hungarians are the only Danubian nation which has successfully assimilated Germans. This is all against the Nazi creed. One of the conditions laid down by Ribbentrop was that

this new minority in Hungary should never be Magyarized, but should retain all the privileges of Germans, including political association with the Reich.

The award was received with fury in Roumania, and especially in Transylvania. Apart from the Roumanians transferred back to Hungarian rule, of unhappy memory, the Transylvanian university city of Cluj was now incorporated in a hostile state. Cluj had been the centre of Roumanian culture and resistance for many centuries. By all Roumanians it is regarded as affectionately as Winchester or York by the English.

So far from being a "settlement," the Vienna award only created new problems and whetted extremist appetites. The resentment in Roumania was countered in Hungary by whole-hearted agitation for the return of the rest of Transylvania and the other lost provinces: there still remained 400,000 Magyars in Roumania. Immediately came bitter complaints of terrorism from both parties. The Roumanians taken over by Hungary complained that they were immediately reduced to serf-level, and that preparations for the Magyarization of the native population were in hand. The Magyar landlords, dispossessed of their lands after 1919, flocked back to Transylvania; the Roumanian peasants faced that crowning tragedy, the loss of their land. The Hungarians complained that the Roumanians were venting their spleen on the Magyars still remaining under their rule. There was certainly a basis of truth in both these allegations. Ever since there has been a continuous sequence of "incidents," and neither side pretends to accept the "settlement" as final. Each hopes that the other will be so weakened during the war that it will form an easy prey. To date, the Roumanians seem to have fulfilled this condition, so great have been the casualties they sustained in Russia. Despite German demands, the Hungarians have made only a modest contribution to the "crusade against Bolshevism."

It is reasonable to anticipate that, unless firm action is taken, Hungary and Roumania will be at each other's throats when the main conflict is over. Roumania is certain to denounce the award at the first convenient moment, and few could blame her: Hun-

garians show no signs of abatement of their larger claims. At present both countries' aspirations are submerged under their common domination by Germany. When this is removed, then they will revert to primitive methods, unless we have something better to offer.

### XIII

The British and American governments have made it quite clear that they will not recognize any territorial changes made during the war unless they were freely accepted by the parties concerned. This is a just and important declaration of principle. The Vienna award was specifically disowned, since it was dictated by the Axis powers and imposed on Roumania under duress. No reasonable man could quarrel with this attitude.

What is our alternative scheme? If we revert to the 1939 position, we merely postpone and aggravate the issue. The Magyars, dissatisfied then, are unlikely to be satisfied now that they have for a time regained even a part of their ancient province.

A solution of ideals has been suggested: that Hungary should join a Balkan Federation (to be discussed later). In the new atmosphere, it is argued, petty quarrels over frontiers would disappear or diminish.

I do not think that the scheme fits the situation—as it is at present. Hungary looks down on the Balkans—there is no deeper insult to the Magyar than to describe his country as Balkan. True, there are economic links between Hungary and the Balkans, and if the proposed Balkan Federation merged with a Central European or Danubian Federation—But we are now looking very far ahead.

No perfect solution is possible. Hitherto all action has been impelled by force on the part of whichever of the contestants happened to be stronger at the moment. I do not believe that Hungary and Roumania are likely to become members of the same federation, or join in any form of friendly co-operation, *until* the problem is solved. Obviously it will demand stern measures.

Transylvania above all the disputed areas of Europe needs an ethnic sorting-out. Racial enmities are too deep: Roumanian peasants hate the Magyars who have oppressed them in the past, Hungarians despise the Roumanians as an inferior race. If peace could be enforced in the region for fifty years, both peoples might settle down side by side. But I would prefer to ensure that peace by removing so far as is humanly possible the basis of quarrel. No perfect settlement is possible; we must be prepared to encounter bitter opposition from both parties, even in the weakness of their defeat.

As a basis of discussion, it might be well to revert to the Roumanian plan, suitably extended: the movement of the Hungarian frontiers to the east, with a subsequent exchange of population. There would be bitter opposition from the people concerned, especially the Szeklers, but they cannot have it both ways. If they are content to live under Roumanian rule, they can stay where they are, among the mountains they love. But if they insist on political union with Hungary, they must move nearer to the Hungarian border.

A new ethnic division and the elimination of minorities would remove another cause of trouble. Hitherto political parties inside the states have used racial minorities as their dupes and pawns. To gain Magyar votes, a Roumanian party would hold out high hopes of privileges. The pledges would be forgotten after the election, but the high hopes remained to intensify the discontent.

We may have to envisage a period of Allied control in Transylvania while the atmosphere is calmed, so that a plebiscite can be held. I should estimate that this would closely follow ethnic lines in its results. Once we know the numbers and distribution of the people who wish to be moved, then our organization can begin its work. It may be that the new Hungary would include Maramures, Crişana, and the Banat: Roumanians here would move east, Magyars from Transylvania taking their place. The exchange would be conducted on a generous basis, over a period of time—say, ten years.

Special attention would need to be paid to communications, or the economic life of Transylvania might be crippled. Until new



roads and railways could be built—and they are already overdue—Roumania should have special rights over Hungarian lines. If the two countries could be persuaded to economic co-operation, the situation would be greatly eased: but we must not bank on this—not for some time.

We shall have to be very firm. There will be people who will see our move as only one in a long series of "solutions," and who will sit back to wait for the next war—which their intransigence will help to cause. It is possible to visualize a Szekler argument: "Let us sit tight. The Allies are stern now, but they will soon forget. So we will vote to stay in our mountains, under Roumanian rule. Then, in ten or fifteen years' time, there will be another eruption, and in its confusion we shall get what we want. Hungary cannot back the wrong horse every time: she has lost twice in succession—third time lucky."

One point to be noted in passing: if we insist on invoking the ethnic principle in Transylvania, the Roumanians are legitimately entitled to demand the same procedure in Bessarabia.

If such things as confidence and toleration existed in this region, stern measures might be unnecessary in Transylvania. But they are rarely encountered in this lovely land, which deserves a better fate than that of a permanent fighting ground. The Roumanians of Transylvania are sturdy peasants, of high intelligence and courage, with a call to greatness. The Magyars are a fine people, generous to a fault—except to their subject races: capable of great achievement. And the Germans of Transylvania, until they were caught up in the intoxication of the Nazi creed, were among the hardest workers of Europe, the best type of settlers. It is worth while taking trouble to smooth out their difficulties, most of which have their base in history—for which the people of today can scarcely be blamed, though they must bear the burdens. The Transylvanians of all races share with us the right to happiness. Coupled with our territorial adjustments we must preach a new creed: that the rights of man transcend nationalistic or racial aspirations: that those qualities of confidence and toleration, ignored today, are essential to peace and life: that the world

owes as much to one man as to another—and that each owes as much to the world.

Finally, we must make it quite clear to Hungary and Roumania that our drastic solution is final, and that any attempt on their part to raise revisionist hopes will be vigorously suppressed and punished. There *will* be such attempts at disruption from without: on our exemplary treatment of the first one will depend the peace of the Balkans and of Europe. The denial of aggressive methods is a principle, and there should be no compromise with principles. We made this mistake before 1939, and are paying a bitter price now.

While re-educating the outlook of the Transylvanians, we must not neglect our own. We have to realize that these problems are not local. When D'Annunzio raided Fiume in 1919, we allowed him to retain the spoils of force; then we were surprised when others followed his example—Zeligowski at Vilna, the Lithuanians at Memel, and Hitler in Austria. If we had dealt with D'Annunzio summarily, the course of subsequent world history might have been very different. There will be many potential D'Annunzios in Hungary and Roumania. If we deal with the first one sternly, we shall avoid a great deal of human misery.

#### XIV

The United Nations' first task is to get Roumania out of the war. She is numbered among our enemies by chance, not by choice. The former British Minister in Bucarest estimated that 86 per cent of Roumanians were pro-British, and I would confirm this. Our war-time policy scarcely encouraged our friends—we automatically included Roumania among Hitler's "jackals," while actually she was driven directly to her present position by the failure of our policy of appeasement. It would be more sensible to proclaim that we want to help the Roumanians to clear out dictators and aggressors, and then to begin again.

There must be no suggestion of bribery. We would create a tremendous impression in Roumania tomorrow by guaranteeing

her old frontiers in the west. But we have to give justice to Hungary as well.

We have every advantage in our hands. We have seen that the majority of Roumanians followed their leaders into the war against Russia, who appeared to them as an aggressor. We must not judge them too hardly for that—we nearly went to war with Russia in 1940 over the invasion of Finland. But only a small minority of Roumanians ever had territorial ambitions beyond the Dniester—Antonescu had great difficulty even in recruiting officials to administer the Transdnistrian annexations. The attitude of most Roumanians was expressed in a letter to Antonescu written in September, 1943: a brave letter, in a dictator state, written jointly by Juliu Maniu, the Peasant Party leader, and M. Bratianu, the Liberal leader—both men of wide influence: "We have continuously warned you of the great dangers to which you are exposing the country against the most powerful nations of the world. Roumania, once Bessarabia and Bukovina had been reunited with the mother country, has no motive whatsoever in continuing the war, nor of working for the defeat of Great Britain or the United States. We protest energetically against the anti-British and anti-American character you have given the war."

The Germans will not make it easy for Roumania to get out of the war. After the disaster at Stalingrad, even General Antonescu was persuaded that his policy was contrary to the will of his people, and would gladly have withdrawn from the conflict. But the Germans had a master-card up their sleeve.

The Iron Guard leader, Horea Sima, had been condemned to death by Antonescu, but escaped to Germany. Now he returned to Roumania, under German protection! The dilemma of Antonescu was acute. If he withdrew from the war, he would be replaced by Horea Sima, and Roumania would be even more fully under German domination. So he stayed on. This political black-mail is likely to be repeated more than once before the final act of the drama is reached.

In March, 1944, significant events occurred. Dr. Beneš, the

Czechoslovak leader, returned from Moscow and gave an interview to British and American press representatives in London. Among other things, he said that Russia intended to take Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, but would support Roumania's claims to Transylvania. This statement had wide effects. To all Roumanians Bessarabia is important, but Transylvania is ten times more important. If a Roumanian *had* to make a choice, he would not hesitate for a second.

Thus an elderly politician, Prince Barbu Stirbey, was recalled from retirement. He had represented Roumania in the peace negotiations following the last war. He was a close friend of the royal family—the young King Michael and his mother were now virtual prisoners, under German guard. Prince Stirbey was known to be in close touch with Dr. Maniu, the peasant leader, and other liberal elements. He made his way across Turkey to Cairo, and it can safely be assumed that he did not go there to look at the Pyramids.

If his mission were to get his country immediately out of the war, it failed. The Germans were not helpful. They did not say: "Well, Roumania, you have helped us very nicely, and we quite understand the position now—you would like us to move out, so that your friends can march in. Very well, we shall be happy to oblige you." On the contrary, the Germans said: "Well, Roumania, so you want to rat on us. Try it, and we'll knock hell out of you!"

It is doubtful if any Roumanian government, however anxious to get out of the war, would be able to hand over its territory to the Allies. Yet the defection of Roumania would be a tremendous gain to us. She has supplied half a million men to the Axis, and still has a large army in the field, despite grievous losses at Odessa, Stalingrad, and in the Crimea. As I write, Russian armies have advanced on to the fringe of Roumanian territory: American and British aircraft are bombing her oil and other industrial plants; the country is reported to be seething with unrest and discontent, with partisans already active in guerrilla warfare.

It would pay the United Nations to act generously to the Roumanians. These are no master race, endeavouring to enslave the world, but a people caught up in the vortex of war against their own will. Their defection would be a serious embarrassment to the Germans. They would have to replace the Roumanian troops with their own, at a time when they have none to spare, and they would suffer the serious disadvantage of a hostile population when the Battle of the Balkans began.

The Italian surrender did not make the Roumanian situation easier: the collapse fortified the belief in Allied victory, but subsequent events were sobering. The Germans obviously proposed to use Italy as a battle-ground—they would presumably do the same in Roumania. Worse still, they might withdraw and allow the Russians to march in. We must face this frankly—that to most Roumanians the fear of Russian occupation is even greater than the hope of an Allied victory. (The Russians, who are realists, know this, and first reports from the areas of Roumania they have occupied show that their behaviour has been scrupulously correct—they have made no attempt to interfere with Roumanian political, cultural, economic, or religious ways of life. This will be useful, but old suspicions cannot be banished in a night.)

The Balkans present many a paradox. The Bulgarians refuse to fight the Russians, but might be persuaded to fight against the British and Americans: the Roumanians fight against the Russians, but would certainly refuse to fight against the British and Americans. The American air crews brought down in the first Ploesti raid were accorded a rousing welcome—to the great annoyance of the Germans, who issued a stern reproof.

Obviously, then, our first objective is agreement between Britain, the United States, and Russia on Balkan policy. If this is achieved on lines of justice, then I believe that it will only be a matter of hours before Roumania is out of the war—her people will take every risk of German occupation and battle. Our gains will be enormous: another country to be held down by German armies; an active ally instead of an opponent; maybe the end of

oil supplies to Germany. Hitler has always won his most effective victories on the political field, not on the battle-ground. Every advantage is now with us. Skilled, honest, and decisive political action in Roumania could save hundreds of thousands of British, American, and Russian lives. I shall be surprised if that action has not been taken long before these words appear in print.

It is in our hands to drive the Roumanians into the depths of malcontent despair; or by our generosity we can ease the present intense sufferings of this unhappy country and direct a potentially great land towards a worthy place in the new European order.

# 4

## YUGOSLAVIA

### I

A NEW COUNTRY was born late in 1918, and was christened "The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes." Later on, like a man promoted to the peerage, it changed its name to Yugoslavia, the Land of the South Slavs. It is always debatable whether a change of name is beneficial.

Of the three constituent races, the Serbs enjoyed the greatest reputation. They were, and perhaps are, the hardiest people in Europe. Serbian soldiers were renowned for their toughness—they could outmarch all others; and for their courage, born of tenacity and endurance. They are a cheerful folk, but they do not forget their enemies: they are strongly endowed with all the peasant virtues, but have not escaped their share of the peasant failings.

No weakling people could ever have survived in Serbia—known as Servia until 1914. The Danube winds a leisurely course through its fertile northern provinces, but farther south the country is mountainous, often forbidding. The valleys are dotted with a myriad peasant holdings; the Serbian farmer is as sturdy and as independent as any in the Balkans. His house is the usual timber cottage, its furniture substantial and homemade. His family work with him in the fields, and his wife— But I need not continue the record, for it is almost a repetition of the Bulgarian scene.

The capital of Serbia is Belgrade, standing on a little promontory at the confluence of the Danube and the Save. Like Bucarest, it is a mixture of East and West, for slums of Turkish date nestle close beside concrete modern buildings. Unlike Bucarest, Belgrade

has not wasted too much of its substance on excrescences. It is a more fitting capital of a peasant state. Nor must any comment on Bucarest imply disrespect for fine official buildings: on the contrary, a government which is meanly housed tends to be meanly estimated. Yet there are proportions in expenditure, just as there are proportions in architecture.

Stephan Raditch, the martyred Croat leader, once described Yugoslavia as "the Balkans in miniature." He was right: the phrase applies even to the more restricted area of Serbia. Even adjacent valleys differ in the types of the people they house. Once I found myself in a little market town at the junction of four mountain valleys. I am no ethnic authority, but without hesitation I could have allocated each man and woman to the correct valley: it was not merely that their costumes differed—the close relationship of men of the same valley was obvious from every feature of ethnic character and outlook.

The Serbian interior was but little visited by tourists—to their own loss. It is a colourful land: the fields of tall corn are flanked by lines of giant yellow sunflowers—their seeds are crushed to provide lamp oil. The workaday costumes of the peasants are homely, but on Sunday many a Serbian valley is an artistic delight. They are friendly people, these colourful Serbs. And they are very proud of their land and its people. That pride took a very practical expression when, bumping over a very poor Serbian road, I broke a spring on my cycle saddle. The man who replaced it refused to charge: his country had let me down—it was his duty and pleasure to make good the damage.

The Serbs are very tired of hearing their country called "The Land of Contrasts"—a title which could be applied to any country on earth. It fits, however. I wandered down a village street: sanitation consisted of a mountain stream, diverted through a wide gutter in the middle of the road: into this all the refuse was cast. If there were plenty of water in the stream, the refuse was carried off; if not, the banks of the gutter were lined with loathsome deposits.

I passed into a grocer's shop to buy some biscuits. The English



grocer plunges his hand into the tin. The Serbian grocer carefully picked up each group of biscuits with a sheet of clean white paper, so that his fingers never touched them.

There are modern buildings in Belgrade of which London would not be ashamed. There are human habitations in the south of Serbia which are the lowest of their kind: mere huts of branches, turf, and mud, each housing a family of seven or eight.

I walked with a smartly dressed Serbian girl, who had taken her degree in Paris, to a marriage fair. Here comely damsels stood shyly around: about their hair, or across their ample bosoms, hung strings of coins—sometimes of gold, sometimes of brass: these last were token coins, indicating the dowry the girl would receive. The Serbian youths looked as keenly at the girls' shoulders and arms as at their faces and dowries, for a peasant needs a sturdy mate.

I went into a local police court with a Serbian magistrate, a man of high intelligence and wide learning. One of the first cases he tried was a mundane drunk and disorderly—mundane until I heard the details. In some country districts an old pagan custom is still occasionally followed: the relatives of a dead man will leave food and *slivovitsa*, the local vodka, by his grave in case he should need refreshment. So the first case at the court was that of a man who had visited the cemetery and had imbibed the vodka intended for the dead!

When a Serb begins to talk of the history of his country, he is bound to mention Kossovo. Here, in the south of Serbia, is an upland plain, surrounded by a ring of gaunt, unfriendly mountains. This was the site of the Serbian Battle of Hastings: Kossovo, the Field of the Blackbirds.

The South Slavs had come from the plains of Southern Russia in the sixth century. They were a pastoral people, and found a pleasant home in the valleys of the Central Balkans. They were not a nation, but were grouped in kindred tribes or clans. Gradually these were fused, as a powerful personality rose to the control of a group of tribes. By the twelfth century a Serbian state had been established—almost an empire, for its authority stretched

well beyond the Serbian ethnic borders. For two centuries it flourished: in its ancient capital at Prizren can be found many traces of ancient glories. This was the era of Stefan Dushan, greatest of the Serbian tsars. Then came that turning-point in Balkan annals—the arrival of the Turks.

After a series of minor combats, Serbs and Turks faced in battle array on the field of Kossovo on Vidovdan (St. Vitus's Day), 1389. The Serbs were weakened by that internecine strife inherent in tribal organization. At a critical moment of the battle the Tsar's nephew, Vuk Brankovic, seething over a personal quarrel, led his army off the field. The remaining Serbs fought with their usual courage against hopeless odds: one of their leaders penetrated to the tent of the Turkish commander, Sultan Murad, and plunged a sword into his body. But Murad, before he died, saw the Serbian leaders beheaded before him.

For nearly five hundred years the Turks ruled Serbia: the local peasants were virtually serfs. Small wonder that the field of Kossovo is the central feature of almost every Serbian folk-song, for the Slavs have a cult of suffering and Kossovo plunged them into a welter of misery.

The Turkish organization was loose. Local governors were appointed in Serbia: they were in effect petty kings, with power of life and death. More than once the Serbs struck blows for their freedom; but these were desultory and disunited, and the general result was a tightening of their bondage. Yet the gradual retreat of the Turks from their conquests in Central Europe brought new hopes. Through the long years of subjection the Serbian spirit lived on—sustained, as usual, by the Church. Religion and nationalism are firmly and affectionately entwined in the Balkans.

The French Revolution set in motion a wave of ideas about liberty which were re-echoed in the Serbian mountains. In 1804 they saw the first attempt at a concerted rising: the Serbian leader was called Kara George—Black George. He is often described as a swineherd, and he was certainly a farmer who owned a considerable number of pigs, for so long a prop of Serbian rural life. He was also a guerrilla leader of courage and ingenuity. Ordi-

nary military expeditions failed to defeat him: their punches landed in the air, while Kara George slipped round the flank and attacked their communications. So the Turks adopted a popular Balkan method, a relic of earlier days—and not always confined to the Balkans! When a man rises to the leadership of his fellows, he inevitably embitters jealous rivals. One of these was another pig farmer, Milosh Obrenovitch, head of a rival clan. He opened negotiations with the Turks: then fulfilled his part of the bond—he forwarded the shaggy head of Black George to the Sultan.

The Turks fulfilled theirs. A small area of Northern Serbia was declared an autonomous if vassal province, with Milosh as its prince: this was in 1817. The first experiment was scarcely successful. Milosh was clever, but quite unscrupulous—he murdered his own father and brother. And all the time he was engaged in bitter feud with the clan of Black George, for the rules of vendetta vengeance are stern.

Nevertheless, his dynasty knew how to take advantage of the declining power of Turkey, and in 1867 Michael Obrenovitch proclaimed the full independence of the little Serbian state. A year later he was killed by the Black George gang.

The feud was of such fury that Serbian independence might have made poor headway but for the external influences we have already noted—the ambitions of Austria and Russia in the Balkans. The Obrenovitch dynasty leaned to Vienna and accepted liberal subsidies. It was natural that Russia should seek out the heir of Kara George, of legendary fame throughout Serbia.

His name was Peter. He was an exile in Switzerland, where he had a reputation as an intellectual as well as a man of action—he had been a komitadji against the Turks and had fought as a volunteer in the Franco-Prussian War. In 1903, when the Russians sought him out, he was a man of sixty.

The King of Serbia was then Alexander Obrenovitch. He was not very popular—few of his dynasty were. He was to discover what later monarchs learned to their cost—that he should be correct in his choice of a wife. Instead, he married his mistress, Draga Maschin, widow of a country doctor. Her conduct outraged the

country—at one time, being childless, she even attempted to fake the birth of an heir. Already most Serbs were indignant at Alexander's Austrophile tendencies: it was widely believed, and with reason, that the Austrians intended to use him to seize Serbia for themselves.

The army took action, on Russian prompting. On the night of June 10, 1903, Belgrade was the scene of a drama too tense for any stage. Thirty years later I heard an eyewitness account, and was thrilled and moved beyond description.

At a given signal—the raising of a blind in the Russian Legation—a group of officers rushed into the palace. Among their leaders was Colonel Maschin, brother-in-law of the Queen: the guards were in the plot, and did not resist. Alexander and Draga attempted to hide in a linen closet, but were dragged out and slashed to pieces—as bloody a murder as ever graced Balkan annals. The remnants of their bodies were laid out in the kitchen, and servants cleared up the mess while the new King Peter Kara-georgevitch walked in to take possession of the palace.

In those days the murder of a king by a rival dynasty was a serious crime. King Edward VII was so shocked that the British Minister was withdrawn from Belgrade. The event was not quite as abnormal in the Balkans of forty years ago, and the Obrenovitches were not popular in Serbia. Besides, the monarchy was no longer as important as it had been: a further personality had begun to dominate the scene.

This was yet another peasant chief, Nikola Pashitch. He did not attempt to found a royal dynasty—he controlled one. So far back as 1880 he had organized a patriotic, nationalistic, Serbian organization, intent on real freedom for his country and for the redemption of the Serbs still under Turkish yoke. His criticisms of the Obrenovitch leaning to Austrian guidance drove him into exile in Bulgaria—his mother was Bulgarian. From thence he conducted a vigorous campaign—in deeds as well as words. His underground organization, popularly known as the Black Hand, was one of the most efficient instruments of terror of its kind. It was responsible for the actual elimination of Alexander and

Draga and, as we have seen, it executed its task very efficiently. A note in passing—one of the principal executioners was named Captain Dimitrovitch: his friends nicknamed him "Apis," the Bee.

Now Serbian nationalism could advance. The country had a King and a Prime Minister. We have already noted the series of wars which continuously enlarged the national territory. But in 1914 there were still large numbers of Serbs outside Serbia; we must glance at them before we plunge into battle.

## II

To the west of Serbia are two provinces known as Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are even more forbidding physically than Serbia itself: largely mountainous, seldom fertile. Once there were huge forests of oak, of which many patches survive. In the north are fertile plains, but in Herzegovina are great areas of *karst*, sheer rock bursting through the shallow soil: waterless land, useless save for the wandering shepherd and his hardy flock, and relieved only by occasional saucers of good land high in the dimples of the mountains.

The two provinces form the most fascinating area in the Balkans. They had formed part of Illyria in the days of Roman occupation: then they swayed, by military conquest, between Byzantium and Hungary-Croatia. Serbian tribes had begun to settle during the seventh century, and gradually a local independence was evolved.

Its complications, as usual, were religious rather than racial. A Bulgarian creed, Bogomilism, spread into Bosnia: its primitive communism appealed to people who knew only the tyranny of local or foreign rulers. Its founder, Jeremiah Bogomil, charged his followers to admit no clerical authority in matters of the mind: neither Church nor State should have power over the individual. All God's children were entitled to share alike the riches of the Creator's earth; so were birds and animals, which should never be killed for food. All true Bogomils should live a clean,

austere life, respecting their neighbours, but admitting no authority from priests or princes. Sacraments and ceremonies were scorned: every man was his own priest, every house a church.

The heresy of such a creed is obvious and antagonized the Church; it was no less opposed to the worldly ideals of those feudal days. But the new faith was far more than a casual creed—its effects can be traced today. In Bulgaria it helped to disintegrate the empire which had spread across the Balkans; in Bosnia it was even more disrupting.

The creed, with its defiance of all authority, was naturally especially unpopular in Rome. In 1250, at Papal instigation, Hungary launched a "crusade" against the Bosnians, and four years later annexed the province. Yet the Magyar authority was only shadowy. Local chiefs—who were also Bogomils—still controlled the isolated valleys: and the king, even if he owed suzerainty to Hungary, was at least a Bosnian.

Bosnians fought beside the Serbs at Kossovo, but the persecutions of the Bogomils continued—the sad history of Balkan disunity is endless. In despair, the Bogomils appealed to the *Turks* for protection against their fellow Christians! They got it, after a fashion. From 1463 the Turks were masters in the province.

The Turks were liberal enough to those who would accept the Moslem faith. In any case, local tribal chiefs saw a chance of saving their lands and their people. Others preferred the tolerance of Islam to the militant Catholicism which sought to exterminate when it could not convert. Many Bosnians adopted the Moslem creed and were accepted as Turks. They ruled their own areas without serious interference, so long as they paid the annual taxes to the Sultan. They had powers of life and death over their Christian brothers—for more than half the Serbs remained faithful to Christianity.

The situation was therefore considerably different from that prevailing in other parts of the Balkans. A Turkish governor was installed, but the forty-eight feudal *kapetans*, or feudal chiefs, of Bosnia, although called Turks, spoke only the Serbian tongue! They effected Bogomil amendments to the Moslem creed and

made it more austere: they never practised polygamy, for example. (Even today, however, the status of the Moslem women in Bosnia is low. If you see a woman riding on a pony while her man walks, you may be certain that she is just about to have a baby or has just had one.) Their religious fanaticism was long retained. Two hundred years after the arrival of the Turks,



HISTORIC PROVINCES OF YUGOSLAVIA.

Bosnians were bitterly critical of the Sultans at Constantinople because they were not Moslem enough! Later, when the Turks of our own day adopted modern methods and customs, the Bosnian Moslems were again their strongest critics.

In the nineteenth century, however, the Serbian battle for freedom affected Bosnian thought profoundly. The call of blood is

strong—and the Christians of Bosnia were encouraged by Serbian successes to demand elementary rights.

Until 1878, however, Moslems and Christians quarrelled too fiercely for the cause of liberty to advance. The Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina altered the situation. The Moslem Serbs hated the Catholic domination: the Christian Serbs hated the political domination of foreigners. At long last both factions began to get together—though by 1907 their maximum demand was for autonomy within the Turkish Empire! This reflected not only the Moslem influence on Bosnia, but the despair of getting more.

A year later Austria-Hungary formally annexed the two provinces. Now the urge to freedom became irresistible, especially among the younger generation, receptive of modern ideas and already impatient of Moslem conservatism. From the practical point of view, the Austrian rule had been very beneficial: roads were built, commerce developed, and an efficient administration replaced the previous corruption. But no benefactor can ever expect gratitude, especially when he does good by force.

It was in Bosnia that the spark was struck which ignited the European tinder-box in 1914. The heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was so injudicious as to enter the capital, Sarajevo, on June 28th—Vidovdan, the anniversary of the disaster of Kossovo, a day of mourning. He was assassinated by a group of students who had determined to adopt stern measures to call the attention of the world to the wrongs of Bosnia. They were backed by a Serbian patriotic organization, which supplied them with arms. We have met its leader before—Colonel Dimitrovitch, popularly called Apis, the Bee.

(Three years later Apis himself was “judicially executed” by the Serbs. A man who knows too much is a potential danger.)

There is a plaque<sup>1</sup> on a wall at Sarajevo, by the street corner which was the scene of the crime. Its wording illustrates the difference between the Balkan outlook and ours. You and I might have written: “On this spot Gavrilo Princip murdered the Arch-

<sup>1</sup> It has recently been removed by the puppet Croat government.



duke Franz Ferdinand, and so precipitated the World War." The actual wording reads: "On this historic spot Gavrilo Princip struck the blow for Serbian liberty, June 28, 1914."

After victory, the tortured body of Princip was brought to Sarajevo for its last rest. He sleeps with his companions in a ceremonial tomb. Every year, on Vidovdan, a great service of commemoration is held. I never attended a more moving ceremony, and was never more thrilled than by my talks with the survivors of the bands of student-conspirators. If you describe Princip as a murderer, your reception is likely to be very cool.

At a frightful cost to the world and to themselves, the Bosnians gained their freedom. In October, 1918, a National Council met at Sarajevo: its major decision was obvious—that Bosnia should join the new Yugoslavia.

At this time the population of Bosnia was 1,898,000, distributed as follows: Serbs (Orthodox), 824,400 (43.4 per cent); Moslems (by origin mostly Serbs), 612,000 (32.2 per cent); and Croats (Catholics), 385,000 (19.3 per cent). The remainder consisted of Jews (some Moslemized), gypsies, and oddments of all the Balkan races. The religious groupings are almost as important as the racial.

### III

I have said that far too few visitors went to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The bazaar at Sarajevo is the most oriental thing in Europe: irregular lanes flanked by tiny booths like large boxes, where the proprietor squats in contemplation among his stock, indifferent to your interest in it—unless he is a Jew! On every hand pass Moslem women, their faces hidden by black veils, and any beauty of figure effectively disguised by long shapeless garments. Minarets are encountered more freely than domes or steeples: five times a day the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer—and they obey, for their religious fervour is strong. Recent modernist ideas in Turkey are freely condemned: the Turks, once the leaders of Islam, are now regarded as dangerous backsliders.

Some of the Bosnian villages are entirely Moslem. Others appear to be, but are not. There were Christian tribes which adopted Moslem dress as a protection against the Turkish irregulars who occasionally ravaged the land. Christians were fair game, but fellow-religionists were respected. Even today, in these conservative valleys, there live Christian women who wear the veil and Christian men (and Jews) who favour breeches of Turkish bagginess. The most ingenious costume I saw was that of a group of women in Southern Bosnia. They wore both trousers and skirts. When times were peaceful, they wore skirts, Christian-fashion: when Turkish raiders approached, they tucked their skirts inside their trousers, hastily donned the veil, and escaped rapine by their appearance as Moslems.

In some rural areas of Bosnia neither costumes nor customs have changed with the passing of centuries. In the towns, however, shoddy suits and cheap frocks are gradually replacing the artistic creations of previous generations. The influence of Vienna and Budapest had some effects, now emphasized by modern Belgrade. Yet probably the most potent force has been that of the cinema: in the Balkans it is often primitive—the travelling show known in Britain thirty years ago. But it means a lot to people who are accustomed to believing what they see, and know little or nothing of Hollywood.

I remember a conversation with a village draper in Bosnia. I have said that the women do not wear underclothes—the sign of loose women. Rather hesitantly, the draper displayed a pair of knickers in his window—and women came in to ask what they were! That was twenty years ago. Now, after a visit from the travelling cinema, his shop is crowded with women demanding underwear like Greta Garbo's.

Every variation in peasant costume has its own meaning. In one region women still wear a metal shield over the abdomen. This is a relic of the days when a Turkish governor ordered his men to kick pregnant Christian women in the stomach and prevent the birth of more infidels. On the contrary, in another area the Turkish pasha declared that pregnant women were not to be

raped—so women wore a huge girdle of ropes to give the appearance of pregnancy. There are no Turkish raiders today, but women still wear the rope girdles.

I have often referred to the conservatism of the peasant. It may appear as a reproach, but in practice it may have been his best protection. Even as it is, he has been too easily led by professional creed-mongers, some sincere and others seeking their own advantage at his cost. The peasant's respect for the educated man is far too high: he does not take enough credit to his own intelligence and natural knowledge.

In one village a peasant displayed to me a rotten tooth. I made the obvious comment—that it would have to come out. Immediately he produced a rusty pair of carpenter's pliers and asked me to do the job. His instinctive trust explained a lot of peasant mistakes in the last fifty years.

Herzegovina, to the south of Bosnia, is still more rugged and primitive. Here the Moslem element is smaller: many of the valleys are so inaccessible that the Turks scarcely knew they existed. The standard of living is low, but that of intelligence is high, and in its heroic folklore Herzegovina is unrivalled. Mountains breed ideas of freedom: they make man appear a pigmy, undeserving of tyrannic powers. The barren karst is a stern neighbour, and only a virile people could have survived in this picturesque but desolate region.

The villages fit the scene, built of native stone—the houses even have flat stones as roofs. Close by will be a *polye*, without which the village could not live. This oasis in the barren karst is supposed to be the muddy floor of some ancient lake, now dried up. The earth is so shallow that no plough could be used: peasants stir the soil gently with a pointed stick: yet it is very fertile.

I did not wonder that the folklore of Herzegovina was rich. The universal karst is of limestone, soft and porous. Centuries of wind and weather have beaten it into fantastic shapes, a veritable background for legend.

Close by Herzegovina is a province of unusual interest—the Sanjak of Novi Pazar. This was the last section of the Balkans to

secure its freedom from the Turks—in 1912; perhaps this explains why it is the most primitive corner of all Yugoslavia. On its border is the Field of the Blackbirds, Kossovo; and near by is Prizren, capital of the ancient Serbian Empire. It is unfortunate, as we shall see, that both these historic districts are today largely populated by Albanians.

The tomb of the Sultan Murad still stands on the fatal battlefield: as does the monastery of Gratchenitz, where the Serbs sought religious consolation before the combat. After the disaster, all Serbia fell under the Turkish yoke: except one small corner, the Black Mountain.

#### IV

In the confusion of 1919, Montenegro suddenly disappeared. British readers, for many years intrigued by its romantic story, searched for it in vain on the new maps of the post-war world.

Certainly its history was outstanding. Montenegro, or Crna Gora, to quote its local name—the Black Mountain—was a mountainous area north of Lake Scutari. Behind the Gulf of Kotor the cliffs rise abruptly, culminating in Mount Lovchen. In these days a famous road zigzags up the steep slope from the edge of the sea, and a visit to Cetinje was a favourite excursion for Dalmatian tourists.

On the mountain slopes are grassy uplands, and between the crests are small, high valleys, with tiny cultivable patches like carpet squares, scarcely capable of supporting even a small population. The whole area is poor, desolate, and forbidding: its people made it live.

Serbian tribes had settled in the upland valleys early. Then, as the Turks advanced into Europe, they were joined by their kinsfolk as refugees. The disastrous defeat at Kossovo hastened the process: thousands of proud Serbs, refusing to bow the knee to the Turkish invader, trekked to the fastnesses of the Black Mountain. This was in 1389. From that time the story of the land was one of valour—continuous resistance against the Turks, who

were never able to conquer this formidable little country. The people were called Montenegrins, but they were Serbs of Serbs.

It was in 1484 that Ivo, a prince of almost legendary fame, proclaimed his country independent. No man without courage might live in it. One of Ivo's laws enacted that if a man were a coward and left the battlefield, then he should be dressed as a woman and driven from the country by the real women! It was significant of those stern days that when Ivo bought a printing press from the Venetians, so that his people might share in the new learning, the type had to be melted down to provide leaden bullets for use against the Turks!

A dozen times in the following centuries Turkish armies penetrated the mountain ring, but always they were driven back. Its rulers were often bishops as well as princes, and exercised influence far beyond their own realms—in Russia, especially, there was great respect for the only Balkan group which had successfully resisted the Turk. In the wars of liberation of the nineteenth century Montenegro was continuously engaged. Her people enjoyed a great reputation as warriors: nor were her rulers lacking in astute diplomacy.

The last of them was Nicholas: his dynasty had ruled the land for over two hundred years, and in 1910 he elevated his title from prince to king. Already he was allied by marriage to half the crowned heads of Europe, for his ten good-looking daughters were in great demand as consorts: one of them became Queen of Italy; another, Queen of Serbia. Nicholas was a wit: when a foreign diplomat remarked that it was a pity that Montenegro had no exports, Nicholas replied: "You forget—my daughters!"

His methods of rule suited the temper of the hardy and independent mountaineers. He dispensed justice under a tree at Cetinje: only late in his reign did he build a palace, of most modest dimensions. He was unique in that he governed and maintained his state without levying taxes. Other Balkan countries allowed foreign powers to manipulate their policies: Nicholas manipulated the foreign powers. He would go to Russia and say: "Austria is getting very pressing—I must have money to defend

my country." Next year Austria would subscribe to defend Montenegro against Russia. And Nicholas could always fall back on his ten highly placed sons-in-law to provide further funds!

Yet he allowed his ambition to lead him astray. The quarrel between the rival dynasties in Serbia suggested an opening—Nicholas himself should become king of the Yugoslavia which promised to emerge. Naturally, this aroused no enthusiasm among the Serbs.

Pursuing his ambition, in 1915 Nicholas sold out to Austria, despite the opposition of his people, betraying the Serbian army in its desperate winter retreat. Yet his new friends failed to grant him the wide powers he demanded as his price. And on the Austrian defeat, his dream abruptly faded.

There had always been a strong movement for union between Montenegro and Serbia—Nicholas had tried to divert this to his own advantage. Now, at the moment of the Austrian collapse, a National Assembly of Montenegrins was convoked and voted the deposition of the royal house and union with Serbia. So Montenegro disappeared from the map and became a province of the new Yugoslavia.

Not that the course of union was smooth. The Montenegrins, accustomed to tribal and family ways, did not appreciate distant control from Belgrade. Further, they were now called upon to pay taxes like the other Serbs, and to this they objected violently. They were warriors, they said, not clerks or peasants.

The situation was well handled, however; gradually hot tempers were subdued, and the proud Montenegrins settled down as Yugoslavs. Not until 1941 was the new unity seriously disturbed. After the Germans had conquered Yugoslavia, they strove to exploit all loyal rivalries which might weaken resistance. Montenegro was proclaimed an independent kingdom again, under Italian protection. But not even Mussolini was able to find a man brave enough to take on the job of being king of this virile people!

At first the Italian occupiers were treated as a huge joke. An order was issued that all arms must be handed in. The 50,000 warriors of Montenegro between them handed in two rifles: one

of these would not work, and the other had been "borrowed" from an unfortunate Italian soldier!

Then tempers hardened. The Montenegrins flocked to join the guerrillas who harried German and Italian forces of occupation. Long before the collapse of Italy, Mussolini's rule of his Black Mountain kingdom was no more than a grim shadow. He had made a grave error of judgment. The Montenegrin still wears his traditional costume: a pillbox hat, with black sides to commemorate Kossovo, red top for blood, and a gold flash for independent Montenegro; bright blue breeches, top boots, a red waistcoat, and a pale blue coat. He scorned ordinary labour—that was for women to do. Mussolini thought that he was just a picturesque survival, a comic-opera character, and found out too late that he was neither. After the Albanian, the Montenegrin is the toughest man in Europe. I asked a woman near Cetinje how many children she had. "Five." I discovered later that she had nine, but the four girls did not count. The proudest title for a woman is "Mother of Montenegrins"—but the termination indicates that the Montenegrins must be sons.

Today there is something rather pathetic in the manner in which the Montenegrin parades the customs of the anti-Turkish years. But in battle his courage is undimmed. When Lord Baden Powell asked a Montenegrin to explain the fighting spirit of the race, he got the reply: "Anybody can go *uphill*, if he goes slowly enough: but it takes a Montenegrin to run *down* with confidence: thus we have overwhelmed our enemies."

The parable might be applied to all the Balkan states: they toiled bravely uphill in their long battle for freedom, but lacked confidence when they tackled the downward slope of peaceful progress which seems easier, but can be more dangerous.

v

We have now covered most of the Serb lands. To the north, in the broad valley of the Save, the Danubian tributary, live the Croats, blood-relatives of the Serbs. One might almost call them

brothers: this would explain why their quarrel has been so bitter.

The ancient history of Croatia is the usual Balkan story: part of the Roman province of Pannonia; overrun by Ostrogoths, Avars, and then the Croats, a Slav tribe akin to the Serbs. The province fell to Byzantium, but in the tenth century had its own king.

Now its story divides sharply from that of Serbia. In 1102 Croatia was conquered by the Hungarians—but remained an autonomous duchy, with its own parliament. With Hungary it fell to the Turks after the Battle of Mohacs in 1526, but after their repulse before Vienna most of the province was freed. At this stage considerable numbers of Serbs fled from the Turkish-ruled Serbia to join their brothers or cousins who had already achieved their freedom. They were welcomed, but the emigration has left many problems behind. The Serb and Croat tongues were identical, but it is easy to tell a Serb from a Croat today—by his religion: the Serbs followed the Orthodox creed; the Croats, by virtue of their geographical position and long association with Hungary, were Roman Catholics.

Probably because of the close Hungarian connection, national consciousness was not as strongly developed among the Croats as among the Serbs. It was aroused, of all people, by Napoleon, who planned to revive the ancient Illyria, with Croatia as its backbone. After his fall, the ever-growing Magyar nationalism and ideas of racial superiority encouraged Croat patriotism. The nineteenth century was one of continuous struggle: Croatia was able to secure a considerable measure of local autonomy, but Hungary controlled her finances. Yet almost year by year the powers of the Croatian parliament were extended: until 1878. We have seen that there were many Croats in Bosnia, and the Austro-Hungarian march into that province seemed to kill all ideas of a reunion. There were riots; the Croatian constitution was suspended, and for twenty years the land was under the direct rule of Budapest.

As would have seemed inevitable to all but blind nationalists, the result was to foster Croat nationalism. A minority of Croats still worked for autonomy with the Austro-Hungarian Empire.



The heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, was known to favour the expansion of the Dual Monarchy into a Triple Empire, in which a Yugoslavia would have equal powers with Austria and Hungary. The fault in this idea was the usual failing of statesmanship—its timing. Twenty years earlier it might have worked. Now it was too late. The majority of Croats had set themselves the ideal of freedom in association with their kinsmen, the Serbs.

This, then, was the political situation in 1914. The Croats differ considerably from their neighbours, in spite of the ties of geography and blood. The greater part of Croatia is a vast and fertile plain, providing a much higher standard of living than the Serbian highlands. The limited stay of the Turks meant that there was no trace of the East: the influence of Rome instead of Constantinople confirmed this. Croatia always leaned to the West. Belgrade was Balkan, but Zagreb might have been Central European: even today it is more dignified than the Serbian capital. Its Jews speak German-Yiddish and not Spanish, as in Serbia. (Many of these latter are descendants of refugees from the Spanish Inquisition.) The Croats do not regard themselves as a Balkan people, but as Central Europeans. Culturally and historically their claims are strong.

They are not as tough as the Serbs. This is generally explained by pointing out that their historical associations were with the civilized Austrians and Hungarians, not the barbarous Turks. But in Zagreb I was shown a tablet to commemorate a peasant "king" who fought for the liberty of his people. He was crowned in the market-place—and his crown was made of red-hot iron. This rivals the atrocities inflicted by the Turks.

The Croats suit their fertile land and the meadows gay with wild flowers. They are a self-controlled people, with calm eyes: true peasants in all their types, slow and persevering, but patient and strong: muddled in their thinking, but doggedly adhering to an opinion once formed. Their culture and folklore are of high account: Meštrovic, perhaps the greatest sculptor of our time, was of Croat birth.

As in Serbia, the working costume of the peasant is plain

enough; but his Sunday attire is very artistic, if not as flamboyant as in other Balkan regions. The decorations are traditional but full of meaning—some of the patterns have scarcely changed in a thousand years. The fervent Catholicism of the peasants mingles pleasantly with many pagan survivals. A bride lies on a pillow which is embroidered with ears of wheat, sign of fertility. After conception, the pillow is embroidered with a cock to ensure that the child shall be a boy. I was regarded with pity in one peasant cottage when I confessed that my own family consisted entirely of girls—and found a cock-embroidered pillow awaiting me one night.

Stripes on a woman's sleeves show how many children she has. Most useful of all, a special pattern in blue and green embroidery indicates that the wearer is a widow who is anxious to remarry!

The Croats are probably more religious than the Serbs. They are certainly better educated: Zagreb has the oldest bookshop and printing works in the north Balkans. There is, however, the same striking contrast between town and country. Most rural houses are of timber; they are more spacious than the Serbian pattern, but just as ill ventilated. They usually have two or three rooms, and will house ten or a dozen people.

## VI

Croatia (or, to quote its full title, Croatia-Slavonia) had a modest Adriatic coast-line from Fiume to the south. It was continued by the long seacoast of Dalmatia, predominantly Croat in population. Dalmatia has a strange shape: it is 210 miles long and only averages 35 miles wide. The coast is cut off from the Bosnian interior by a range of inhospitable mountains. This feature has had important political and economic effects. Italian claims to some extent are based on the undoubted fact that most Dalmatian towns can communicate much more easily with Italy than with the rest of Yugoslavia.

These towns are the key to Dalmatia's history. The Greeks established them, the Romans took them over. When the Hun-

garians mastered Croatia, Dalmatia retained its Free Cities. In 1420 they were sold to Venice and were held until Napoleon presented the province to Austria. The outlook of many Dalmatian citizens is still very local. In Austrian days, the official language was Italian—at that time, of course, Austria governed considerable areas in northern Italy.

Nevertheless, the Serbian battle for independence aroused echoes of nationalist consciousness in Dalmatia. The Austrian navy in the First World War was largely manned by Croat sailors, who were early described as “unreliable”—since their sympathies were so obviously with the other side. When Austria cracked, Dalmatia had no hesitation in joining the new Yugoslav kingdom.

The province is probably the best known of Yugoslavia. Cruises down its coast were famous holiday excursions: though in my opinion they could not compare in interest with the interior. There were famous show places like Split, where the Roman Emperor Diocletian built his palace. (Croat Dalmatia supplied two other Roman Emperors—Claudius and Aurelian.)

Dubrovnik (the old Ragusa) is a magnificent example of the Mediterranean merchant city. Close by is the Isle of Loçum, where King Richard I was wrecked, to be handed over to his enemy the Duke of Austria, and to inspire the pretty if quite unfounded story of the search by his faithful minstrel, Blondel. Farther south still is the lovely Bay of Kotor, where all the navies of the world could ride at safe anchorage.

The vegetation along the coast is almost tropical: palms, oleanders, and pomegranates grow in profusion. A few miles inland, however, the barren karst begins, bare and bleak, almost white in the fierce rays of the Adriatic sun.

## VII

Yugoslavia is formed like a jigsaw puzzle from ancient provinces. The loveliest of them all is Slovenia, a mountain land, Tyrolean in its character and in its atmosphere: homeland of a very pleasant people, who have been accustomed to a better life than

Croats and Serbs: their houses are more substantial—the ground floor usually of stone, the second of wood. As a sign of prosperity, the house carries a balcony: more important, it is clean and well kept.

The Croats and Serbs may be blood brothers: the Slovenes are more distant relatives. Their language, though Slav in origin, differs from Serbo-Croat. In religion and culture they are akin to the Croats; in education they are advanced—their illiteracy rate is only 5.5 per cent, which would be remarkable in any mountainous country. I counted seven excellent bookshops in Liubliana, the Slovene capital. The publication of books in Slovenia is proportionately the highest in the world. Religion has a great influence upon the masses of the people: every mountain path has its shrines, and the Corpus Christi processions are unrivalled in South-eastern Europe.

But for the language, you might easily imagine yourself in Austria. In the eighth century the Slovenes—of the same original Slav stock as the Serbs and Croats—were resisting invaders and invited Bavarian chiefs to aid them. As usual, the allies stayed on, and eventually became masters of the little mountain province; later it passed under Austrian rule.

Thus here is no record of Balkan cruelty and continuous warfare: Slovenia was a civilized land while the other Balkan regions lived through the Turkish night. The Slovenes collaborated with the Austrians—the sensible thing to do in their circumstances—and many of them attained high rank in the Imperial Service. Yet the people always resisted Germanization and remained Slovenes. This characteristic has annoyed the Germans: the Slovenes are the perfect reply to arguments of massification. A race of only one and a half million people, they have resisted the bribes and threats, and emphatically retain their own language and culture.

Again it was Napoleon's scheme for a revived Illyria which first aroused the national spirit of the Slovenes—especially as the capital of the new state was to be Liubliana. Thereafter the record follows closely that of Croatia, and by 1914 the mind of Slovenia was ripe for Yugoslav Federation.

The Slovenes were never very actively involved in the quarrel

which was to split Croats and Serbs. They were the most exposed to German and Italian pressure of all the Yugoslav peoples, and realized that their freedom depended upon Yugoslav unity.

### VIII

The greatest sufferings of the First World War fell upon the Serbs.

They defended their country with traditional tenacious courage: more than once they drove back the Austrian invaders. Then, in 1915, Bulgaria struck at the Serbian flank. The defeated army made a terrible retreat across the mountains of Albania, the survivors to muster at Corfu.

The devastation of Serbia was complete. Over a million people died—one in five of the entire population. As a heroic measure to preserve the race, the government attempted to move 30,000 boys beyond the reach of the invaders, but half of them succumbed to the appalling rigours of the retreat. Of the survivors, some hundreds were brought over to Britain to be educated.

Transferred to Salonika and refitted, the Serbian army awaited the moment for its revenge. It came in September, 1918, in the Balkan campaign which transformed the whole course of the war in a week.

There were emotional scenes as the embittered Serbs drove their enemies northwards over their stricken land. And, as we have seen, in Croatia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Montenegro national assemblies hastened to break away from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and to declare for unity with their kinsmen, the Serbs. The victorious Allies regarded the moves with beneficent approval—they had long been foreshadowed in the Fourteen Points.

Yet, while the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes rejoiced, its neighbours glowered. Difficulties abounded. We have already considered the Bulgarian claims to Macedonia—or South Serbia, as was now its official title. The Albanians claimed an adjacent area, including the sacred field of Kossovo. Hungary

writhed with fury as the southern fringe of her plain was allocated to her new neighbour. In the contrary direction, there were half a million Croats and Slovenes still under Italian rule. Yet these vexed problems might have been solved had Yugoslav unity been preserved. No exterior menace is as potent as weakness within.

## IX

For years before the war began, Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes had met in secret conference to decide the fashion of the Yugoslavia they desired. Yet, when they achieved their ambition, they were not prepared—they did not know what to do with it. The Yugoslavs should be warned that they must not allow history to repeat itself in 1944 or 1945; so should we.

In the earliest days of unity there were difficulties. The new state needed money, desperately. Since Serbia had been laid waste, most of the cash had to be collected from the other provinces. The urgent realities of the day rapidly dispelled emotional and sentimental dreams. Nor was ethnic kinship enough to make collaboration easy: for eight hundred years the three branches of the Yugoslav tribe had lived under very different conditions—under different civilizations. Nationality *can* be submerged by long existence in an alien land: the descendants of the Huguenots and the Flemish weavers are as English as I am. The marvel is, indeed, not that there were differences between Serb and Croat in outlook; but that after so many centuries they retained so much in common.

Croats and Slovenes lived under Austrian and Hungarian rule, generally beneficent and comparatively just; Serbs lived under Turkish despots, inefficient, corrupt, and sometimes brutal. Croats and Slovenes were Christianized from Rome, Serbs from Constantinople. Thus today Croats and Slovenes are Roman Catholics; Serbs, Orthodox. We have already noted the power of religious differences. And although a Croat can understand every word a Serb says, he cannot understand a word he writes, for Croats use the Latin alphabet and the Serbs the Cyrillic.

Croats and Slovenes enjoyed the moderate educational facilities of Austria-Hungary; the Serbs had to make their own. Croats and Slovenes were peasants of peace—although the Austrians esteemed them as soldiers when the occasion arose. The Serbs were bred on war—their life under the Turks was one long desultory guerrilla campaign, and the last hundred years a ceaseless battle for liberty. Croats and Slovenes made accommodations with their civilized rulers, and some of them attained the highest military, political, and cultural rank; the Serbs were almost serfs, hating their Turkish masters. The culture of Western Europe permeated Croatia and Slovenia, but could not cross the Turkish frontier. The Croat is polite and refined, a companion for conversation; the Serb is vigorous and tough, a companion for battle.

Is it marvellous, then, that after eight hundred years the outlook of the South Slav brothers differed vastly? If a Huguenot descendant did return to France, would he not have difficulty in adjusting himself to French conditions? And the differences between the civilizations of England and France are minor compared with the vast gulf between those of Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

There was some suspicion in Serbia because the Croats, devout Catholics, inclined to clericalism and religious intolerance. This was often, though wrongly, interpreted as a leaning towards Catholic Italy, one of the enemies of the new Yugoslavia. Further, the Croat patriotism was primarily local: under Hungary, they had always been in opposition, and had no great respect for the state. This is a feature not unknown among peoples long subject to foreign rule. And now the seat of government was Belgrade, a thoroughly Serbian city; and the Serbs held most of the government posts, claiming that their century of independence had given them wider experience in administration.

The Croats made the surprising discovery that they were outnumbered—there were six million Serbs and only three million Croats and Slovenes. Thus the Serbs could always outvote the Croats and Slovenes. One would have imagined that this might have been foreseen! Further, by a weird election law typical of

the Balkans, a party which polled one-half of the total votes received 75 per cent of the seats.<sup>1</sup>

This elementary consideration—the numerical preponderance of the Serbs—was immediately a disruptive element. In 1917 Pashitch had met the Croat leader, Ante Trumbitch, on the island of Corfu. From the agreement they signed emerged the unity of the Yugoslav peoples. The Croats visualized a federal state, but Pashitch did not. He did, however, give a verbal assurance that the Croat wishes would be honoured. But when in 1921 the new Constitution was debated, the Serb vote was cast for a centralized state, which thus became the form of government; from this moment the Croats were antagonized.

Nor were all the Serbian leaders restrained in the hour of their triumph. The veteran Pashitch had fought a lifetime for the freedom of Serbia; he was too old to think of Yugoslavia. He was not alone in regarding Croatia and Slovenia as extensions of Serbia, to be ruled by the men who had carried on the fight for freedom. The Croats, naturally, did not appreciate this point of view! They agreed that the Serbian sacrifices had been very great; yet the Croats, too, had preserved their language and national consciousness under even more difficult conditions—any man would have revolted against the tyranny of the Turks, but might be beguiled by the comparative tolerance of Austria-Hungary, and the economic advantages which accompanied collaboration. In short, the Croats refused to regard themselves as slaves freed by the heroic Serbs.

The quarrel was complicated by its personalities. Raditch, now the Croat Peasant leader, was dynamic in speech and methods. He had plenty of legitimate grievances—but there were others. Even

<sup>1</sup> This is common practice in the Balkans—in Roumania the party which got 40 per cent of the total votes received 70 per cent of the parliamentary seats. In theory, the idea was beneficent—to make a parliamentary system work in spite of a deluge of small parties. In practice, it gave every advantage to the government which controlled the elections. Yet we must not sneer too hardly at this sign of "Balkan immaturity." In English-speaking countries, with our single-member constituencies, it is quite possible for a party to get less than 50 per cent of the votes cast and yet secure considerably more than 75 per cent of the parliamentary seats.



had conditions in Europe been perfect, the way of the new state would have been hard. With Europe distinctly imperfect, there were many causes for complaint; and, since the Serbs assumed the major share of the government, it was easy to direct all grievances against Belgrade.

Then, in 1928, Raditch was murdered while in the parliamentary chamber. The power of a martyr is without limit. Even conciliatory Croats flung themselves into the popular campaign. Dr. Matchek, the successor to Raditch, found himself in a remarkably strong position: he secured sixty-three Croat seats out of the sixty-seven available.

(There are obvious dangers in an overwhelming majority. Dr. Matchek found himself almost in the position of a dictator. When open voting again became the rule in Yugoslavia, a man had to be very brave to vote against 95 per cent of his fellows. The Serbs regarded it as significant that the Croats favoured the undemocratic method of open voting. Serb complaints of Italian influence in Croatia on religious grounds were very much exaggerated. The Croat leaders were very careful to separate religion from politics, and vigorously opposed all forms of clerical parties.)

No responsible Croat demanded the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The popular idea envisaged a federal state with centralized financial, defence, and diplomatic powers, but with wide autonomy allocated to its constituent provinces—Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Dalmatia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Voivodina (comprising the Backa and the Yugoslav share of the Banat).

King Alexander opposed this conception firmly. The idea of unity dominated all his actions—he believed that any weakening of the central government would be an invitation to intervention by jealous neighbours: and in this at least he was not without justification. But his methods had unfortunate results. He split up Yugoslavia into nine *banovinas*, or provinces. They did not attempt to follow historic lines, but geographic and economic. His idea was simple: he was not trying to make Croats into Serbs, but to make both into Yugoslavs.

I might revert to my comparison of Yugoslavia with a jigsaw

puzzle. The Croats would claim that the picture was complete, despite the fact that it was composed of many fragments of different shapes. Alexander's argument was that there would be nothing but a surface picture, which would be shaken to pieces at the first jolt: easy to maintain if left at peace, but obviously weak if it should be menaced by a spoiling hand.

The less co-operation from the Croats, the wider the spread of Serbian rule. The Serbs were always noted as fighters rather than as diplomats. More than once in Croatia I got the impression of an occupying army of Serbian soldiers and officials. A bitter quarrel developed. Each race tended to despise the other: the Serbs on their record as warriors, the Croats on their superior culture.

Ironically, the tension was relieved by the murder of King Alexander. The organization which plotted the assassination was a Croat group called the Ustachi, headed by Ante Pavelitch. It operated from Italy and Hungary, and was backed by both—thereby justifying Alexander's fears. The murder shocked the soul of the simple, religious Croat peasant.

By this time, too, both Hitler and Mussolini were scheming in Yugoslavia. The German drive for economic domination was in full swing. Hitler used his partner to create political discord by setting man against man.

Yet no one could deny that Dr. Matchek was master in Croatia. He had his own peasant army, the Salzachka Zashtita, or Peasant Guard. It was well disciplined, not given to the normal excesses of its kind, and the Serbs exaggerated when they described it as a second I.M.R.O. Nevertheless, it *was* a private army, and the possibility of a dangerous clash was always present.

The Croatian problem had always been serious. After the fall of Czechoslovakia it became desperately urgent.

The parallel was only too obvious. The Slovaks, to gain autonomy, had "invited" the intervention of Germany. Might not the Croats be used in similar fashion? Their complaints against the Serbs were deeper and more forceful than any Slovak complaints against the Czechs. Here was a unique opportunity for Machiavel-

lian politics. The Italian seizure of Albania, in April, 1939, brought the danger nearer home.

Neither the Serb nor the Croat leaders missed the signal of danger. M. Tsvetkovitch, the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, entered into negotiations with Dr. Matchek, the Croat leader: this was in April, 1939—immediately after the seizure of Czechoslovakia. At an early date it was announced that the principle of a federal state had been accepted: unhappily the negotiations broke down on details. There was a surge of feeling in Croatia, and for a moment it appeared that ugly events were pending.

The approach of desperate crisis in Europe again prompted renewed efforts, and on August 24, 1939—just one week before the outbreak of open war—a final agreement was signed. The Croats were to have a Parliament at Zagreb with full autonomy for local affairs—finance, defence, and foreign affairs remained under the control of the central government. The Yugoslav Cabinet was reconstructed to include six Serbs, six Croats, and six representatives of other racial organizations or political parties. Dr. Matchek became Vice-Premier to M. Tsvetkovitch.

The new Croatia exceeded the boundaries of the ancient kingdom—its extent had been the principal cause of failure of earlier conversations. Besides Croatia-Slavonia, it included most of Dalmatia and the northern part of Bosnia: altogether, it comprised 26.6 per cent of the Yugoslav territory. Naturally, it was impossible to fix boundaries which accorded exactly with ethnic frontiers, for the branches of the Yugoslav tribe are freely mixed. It was estimated that the population of the new autonomous state was about 4,425,000: of these, 3,220,000 were Croats and 890,000 Serbs—these latter including 165,000 Bosnian Serbs, who were Moslems.

The agreement—generally termed the *Sporazum*—was a triumph for common sense. Nevertheless, all difficulties were not resolved. Die-hards on both sides bitterly expressed their resentment—some Croats demanding complete independence, some Serbs declaring that the federal scheme was a weakness. Other Croats, though more moderate, claimed a still greater share of

control, especially over expenditure—to which Croatia, as being naturally richer than Serbia, contributes out of its proportion. Proud Serbs, living in history, recalled bitterly that it was they, not the Croats, who had won freedom for Yugoslavia, and were especially incensed that the agreement placed Serbs under Croat rule. Details of the agreement brought long and bitter arguments, and German and Italian agents were always at hand to create discord. The dictators recognized from the first that a strong federal state might be as useless to them as a strong unified Yugoslavia, and took steps to hamper its development.

However, the external dangers seemed likely to ease the internal difficulties. At least a start was made in the organization of the new state. Given a few years of peace, in which the barriers of suspicion could have been broken down, the new Yugoslavia might have stridden firmly ahead.

Unfortunately, statesmanship cannot depend upon periods of peace. Long before the Sporazum could have unifying results, or before inherent suspicions could be dissolved, Yugoslavia had to face a new and a more bitter ordeal. Nor did its course tend to make easier the problem of the relations between Serbs and Croats.

## X

Before taking up our record of Yugoslavia, we should first consider some of the other problems which beset this much troubled land. One especially is likely to be of urgent importance. Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes may quarrel among themselves, but in their attitude towards Italy they are united. Nor were their claims the products of the intoxicating moments of optimism following the Italian collapse: they were seriously preferred long before the war began—from 1919 onwards, in fact.

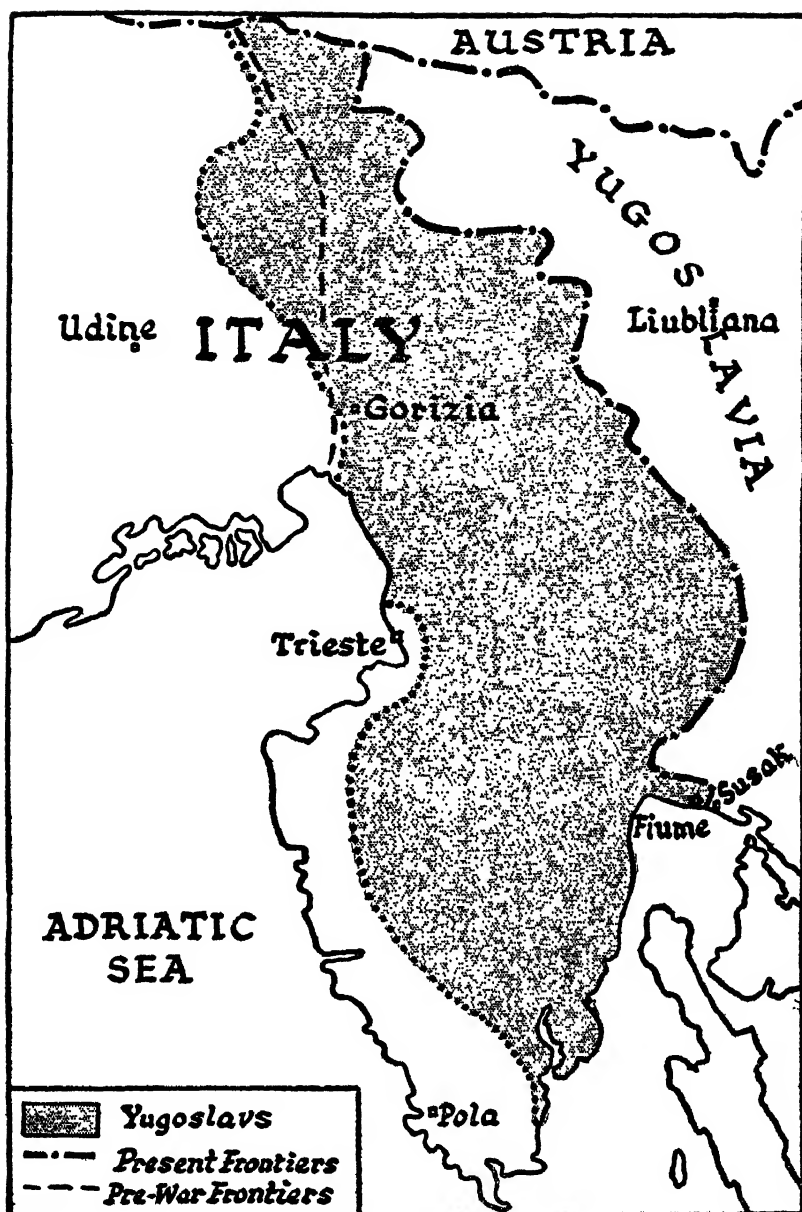
In 1914 Italy was the ally of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Nevertheless, she declined—quite legitimately—to enter the war on their side. Aggressive action was in no case contemplated or condoned by the alliance, and in any event Austria had plunged

into the war without any attempt to co-operate with her. Further, the Treaty of Alliance, made in 1882, stated that it was not in any case directed against England. This saving clause was not inserted because Italy's extensive coast-line put her at the mercy of the British fleet, but because of the traditional friendship between the two countries. Italy had never forgotten British moral and material support in her long struggle for freedom, and the idea of war with Britain was unthinkable. Consideration of these sentiments makes unhappy reading of recent history!

At first it was assumed that she would remain neutral, but powerful factions saw an opportunity for the completion of Italian unity. Considerable numbers of Italians still lived under Austro-Hungarian rule, and if they were to be freed the time was now or never. As elsewhere, it was easier to negotiate, not with her allies, but with the other side. Demands to Austria brought unsatisfactory responses, but Britain and France were quite prepared to give away Austrian territory. By the Treaty of London, April, 1915, it was agreed that Italy should enter into the war on the Allied side and that on its successful conclusion she should be allocated the Trentino, Istria and the Julian March, Northern Dalmatia, Valona (in Albania) and a share of Asia Minor. It is unnecessary to point out that these areas far exceeded those inhabited by Italians.

At the Peace Conference, therefore, Italy demanded the fulfilment of her bond. President Wilson, however, opposed her claims with unusual firmness—he went even so far as to issue a personal appeal to the Italian people over the heads of their government. He argued that he knew nothing of these secret treaties—which scarcely abrogated them, nevertheless! Much more forcible was the contention that Italy had accepted his Fourteen Points, and that these principles overrode any previous arrangement.

A glance at the sketch map of the Julian March is worth while. "Julian March" is the term applied to the Istrian Peninsula and the provinces of Gorizia, Trieste, and Fiume—that is to say, all the north-eastern territory gained by Italy. It has a considerable Italian population—but actually the greater part of the district



THE JULIAN MARCH AND ISTRIA, 1939.

is preponderantly Yugoslav! Most of the towns, particularly in Istria, are largely Italian, together with the western coastal strip. The remainder, if President Wilson's principles were to be followed, would certainly have been allocated to Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav government was not slow to assert its claims. No sooner was the war over than Italian and Serb patrols were involved in "incidents," some of them alarming. The Yugoslavs demanded practically all the territory up to the old Italian frontier. They agreed that Trieste and several Istrian towns were largely Italian, but insisted that the surrounding countryside was entirely Yugoslav. Farther north their claim was clearer, for west of Gorizia and Trieste there was no substantial Italian element.

The Italians were aghast—it appeared that they had fought the war for nothing! The Yugoslavs drove the wound deeper when they pointed out that 50,000 Croats and Slovenes were actually enclosed within the pre-war Italian frontier. This is quite true—until quite recently the district north-east of Udine was called Italian Slavia and had an overwhelmingly Slav population. This was worse and worse! So far from gaining territory, President Wilson's principles would actually deprive Italy of a corner of one of her frontier provinces!

In the Julian March complete there were slightly more Croats and Slovenes than Italians. If you took the figure of Croats and Slovenes as half a million, you would not be far wrong. Recent Italian figures are quite untrustworthy, for anybody who could speak Italian was classed as Italian. In one Croat commune the census figures claimed that out of its considerable population there were only thirteen adult Croats and three Slovenes. Yet these were credited with 3,060 children! Croats and Slovenes are reasonably fertile and have large families, but at least Nature has her limits!

Even a census by these methods gave a total of 377,000 Croats and Slovenes. The Yugoslav figure is 600,000, so 500,000 is a reasonable compromise. A few thousands more or less do not affect the principle of the argument.

Despite President Wilson, Italy obtained a considerable pro-

portion of her demands. Britain and France were uneasy; they had made specific promises to obtain her support in the war, and now they wished to honour these promises so far as they could. Already she was disappointed in that only a microscopic share of the conquered African territory was allocated to her, and any aspirations to Asia Minor soon disappeared. The Peace Conference salved its conscience, too, by awarding Dalmatia to Yugoslavia.

There was little to be argued against this course. The Dalmatians are definitely Yugoslavs, a branch of the Croat family. On the seacoast, however, there are small Italian settlements, remnants of the days when Venice dominated the Adriatic. One of these, Zara, was handed to Italy, but the remainder of the coastal area joined its natural hinterland. In all the ports there are Italian colonies, and many of the local Croats, by long cultural and commercial association, speak Italian as well as their own tongue.

The Yugoslavs did not pretend to be satisfied at the allocation of the Julian March to Italy. Their people on the other side of the frontier have not been happy. Italian conduct, especially since the rise of the Fascists, has been severe and repressive. Slav schools and cultural institutions have been rigorously suppressed; Italianization has been continuous: thousands of Croats and Slovenes have been driven from their homes. There has been, in fact, a vast and organized programme intended to change half a million Croats and Slovenes into Italians, their own wishes being of no account whatsoever.

It has failed. We shall certainly have to face a demand for frontier rectification here: the Yugoslavs maintained it even in their darkest hours. In 1919 we could not do justice because of the restrictions of the Treaty of London; this time we can approach the problem with an open mind.

Just before their final collapse, the Italians offered to surrender if we would guarantee their frontiers of 1938. We declined, quite properly. Istria is not the only question which calls for consideration. Nor will the status of "co-belligerency" entitle the Italians to deny justice to others. Memories of the past cannot be eradicated in a day, and we must not expect Yugoslav and Greek out-



look on Italy to be quite as generous as our own. At the same time, there should be no policy of revenge. As to territorial problems, we have a clear guide in the terms and spirit of the Atlantic Charter.

This one is not insoluble. A plebiscite will reveal the Croat and Slovene wishes, for the Slav element is fairly compact. There will naturally be a reasonable demand that Italians who have been "planted" in the district shall not be allowed to vote. In our anxiety to give justice to the Slovenes, we must not deny it to the Italians. If the frontier were drawn along purely ethnic lines, the hinterland of Trieste would be ridiculously reduced—the port might be ruined. It might be advisable to allocate to Italy a wider section of the Istrian Peninsula than her native population justifies, remove the local Slovene population from the additional strip and replace them by the unfortunate Italians who have so recently been "planted" on Slav lands. This solution assumes that the plebiscite would favour the incorporation of the district with Yugoslavia. I do not know the situation today, but when last there in 1936 my estimate was that a very considerable majority of Slovenes would favour that course. Little that has happened since can have tempted them to change their minds.

And, as we shall see, if there are thousands of Italians who will have no legitimate right to vote in the plebiscite, there are tens of thousands of Slovenes who have now been expelled from their country, and who will have to be brought back to vote—if they are still alive.

## XI

Coupled with the problem of the Julian March is that of Fiume. In the Treaty of London which induced Italy's entry into the war, Fiume was definitely excluded from the promised rewards. It was the natural port of Croatia and Slovenia and was to be held either for the Croatian state which some people then envisaged, or for the new Yugoslav state. Immediately after the Armistice both Italian and Yugoslav troops entered the town, with many

resultant clashes. Eventually Fiume was occupied by an international force pending its disposal.

Although Fiume was a Hungarian port until 1918, its population was 60 per cent Italian—but many of the Italians were recent settlers. Here was the basis of these claims. The Treaty of London had promised Northern Dalmatia to Italy: President Wilson had refused, since Dalmatia was Yugoslav. Very well; by his own principle of self-determination Fiume was Italian. Nevertheless, the hinterland of the port was almost 100 per cent Yugoslav, and its prosperity depended entirely upon Yugoslavia.

But economics mean little to fervent nationalists. In September, 1919, the Italian poet Gabriele d'Annunzio raided Fiume with an irregular band of legionaries and defied everybody, the newly born League of Nations included. Without official Italian backing, he "ruled" Fiume, and his fanatic creed exasperated friends and opponents alike. Although eventually flung out of the port, he achieved his end. Italy and Yugoslavia eventually entered into direct negotiations. Fiume became part of Italy, connected with the Julian March by a narrow corridor. On the other hand, its eastern suburb, Susak, went to Yugoslavia.

Fiume became a tragic comedy—its wharves deserted, while Susak expanded and flourished. Thousands of Italians crossed into Yugoslavia every day to work in Susak! Yet, as we have already noted, the real tragedy was that D'Annunzio's victory stimulated that doctrine of force which inspired Mussolini and other dictators. A little firmness with this firebrand, and the course of history would have been easier. In 1919 we were too war-weary to be firm: we must not let this happen again.

The question of Fiume is not likely to trouble the peace-makers unduly. Whatever solution of the Julian March problem is adopted, it can surely be assumed that the town will now recover its rightful place as the natural port of Croatia and Slovenia, the Italian portion of its population being transferred to Italian towns if it does not prefer to remain under Yugoslav rule.

One minor addendum to the Slovene problem should be mentioned here. Farther north, in the Austrian province of Styria,

live about 80,000 Slovenes. In the province they are outnumbered by Germans, but in some valleys near the frontiers they form the majority. In 1919, however, a plebiscite was held and the decision was to remain in Austria. The voting showed that many Slovenes favoured this course. It was perhaps not remarkable. The Styrian Slovenes had been under her rule for seven hundred years, were located in Austria proper, not an outside province; they had been entirely Germanized, and their economic life was entirely bound up with that of Austria—the main Alpine range separated them from their brothers in Slovenia.

There are, however, tens of thousands of Germans in Slovenia, so if this question should arise again it could reasonably be settled by an exchange of populations.

## XII

The frontiers of Yugoslavia and Hungary have been the subject of continuous discussion. The Magyars have never disguised their revisionist claims. It was because of their belief that they had been wronged that they gave hospitality and aid to the Ustachi, which plotted the murder of Alexander and the disruption of Yugoslavia.

We have already encountered one of the disputed provinces—the Banat. In 1919, two thirds of this fertile province were allocated to Roumania, one third to Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav proportion was justified by the ethnic composition; it was here that Serbs had fled beyond the Turkish clutch, and had done a great deal to keep alive the national spirit. Yet the region included tens of thousands of Magyars and Germans. Until the rise of Hitler, the Germans accepted the situation; the Magyars never pretended to do so.

In this instance it is convenient to proceed in approximately chronological order. After the defeat of Yugoslavia by the Axis, the country was divided into puppet states and provinces. But the Yugoslav share of the Banat was held firmly under German rule, and German settlers from other Balkan countries have been

gathered here. The idea is quite obvious: apart from its economic wealth, it could be made to serve as a Balkan East Prussia, giving Germany the "right" to march over a Hungarian Corridor and the power to dominate the Balkans.

Roumanian anxiety was great—would she be invited to surrender her share of the Banat? Nor are the Hungarians happy—they want it for themselves, not for the Germans. Yet the plan is clear; it could not be announced in its early stages, for fear of upsetting the satellite states, yet Hitler has already chosen a new name for the Banat—a German name: *Donaustaat*—Danube State.

Immediately to the west of the Banat is the Backa, a Magyar triangle pushing south into Yugoslavia. Here the Magyars form the majority of the population—300,000 as against 100,000 Serbs, plus the usual assortment of other races. The difficulty is that most of the Serbs (they are Bunjevaks, or Catholic Serbs) are to be found about Subotica, in the north of the province, so that if it were returned to Hungary the Serbian population would go with it. There is an obvious case here for an exchange of population. Yet the temper of the Serbs after victory is not likely to be favourable to concessions, for they are bitterly resentful of Hungarian conduct.

Just before the German attack on Yugoslavia in April, 1941, Hungary signed a pact of "eternal friendship" with her. Almost immediately the Germans called upon Hungary to allow her territory to be used as the base of an attack on her neighbour. Count Teleki, the Hungarian Prime Minister, committed suicide because of the disgrace to his country's honour.

With Yugoslavia rapidly overpowered by the German onslaught, it was perhaps too much to expect that Hungarian nationalism could be restrained by a mere scrap of paper like a pact of eternal friendship. Hungarian troops seized the whole of the Backa, with the smaller district of Boranja, immediately to the west. Later, Hitler allocated to Hungary the additional small areas of Prekomurje and Medjumurje, at the expense of Croatia and Slovenia. All these areas had a Magyar majority, but also a

large Yugoslav population. The hand of the occupying forces was not light: hundreds of Serbs were executed and thousands banished from their homes. Such things are not lightly forgotten, and make difficult the atmosphere of calm and reason which is vital to a fair solution of frontier difficulties.

### XIII

At this stage it is useful to insert some important basic facts and figures about Yugoslavia.

Its area is 96,000 square miles—that is, larger than Great Britain. The population in 1940 numbered nearly 16,000,000. Of these over half a million are Germans, mostly in the Danube area; in the same region are found 475,000 Magyars. We have already noted the half-million Albanians in the south. There are about 250,000 Roumanians in the north-east and another 250,000 people of other Slav stocks scattered over the country. The Yugoslav population proper included 8,250,000 Serbs—just over 50 per cent of the whole—3,575,000 Croats, and 1,450,000 Slovenes.

The land frontiers total 2,360 miles, with a seacoast of 1,000 miles. Hence the difficulty of defence, when forces had to be widespread. Of the great area of land, only 28 per cent is arable.

The industrial side of Yugoslavia is more important than that of Roumania and Bulgaria (though 80 per cent of it was controlled by foreign capital), but 71 per cent of the population is engaged on agriculture. The mineral resources, well known to the Romans, were neglected by the Turks, but are now being exploited and offer great possibilities. In 1938, for example, Yugoslavia produced 2,212,000 metric tons of coal and lignite, 220,000 of steel, 300,000 of iron ore, 406,000 of bauxite, 83,000 of lead, 42,000 of copper, with smaller quantities of chrome, gold, silver, and antimony. The number of industrial workers was about 700,000.

Agricultural production covered the usual Balkan crops—wheat, corn, oats, barley, rye, beets and grapes. Small quantities were exported in order to gain the essential foreign currency, but

this was done only at the expense of the standard of living, already very low. Yugoslavia needs all her peasant field products, and more. If the entire agricultural exports were kept at home, everybody in Yugoslavia would receive an extra two ounces of bread per day. The people need it, and a good deal more.

There were 10,000,000 sheep in the country and 4,000,000 horses and cattle. Again, these figures are small for a predominantly agricultural country, but after the last war Serbia had to start again almost from the beginning—the German and Austrian occupation had reduced the stocks to miserable standards of quality and quantity.

Wages also follow the Balkan pattern. An industrial worker averages \$5 a week: a casual labourer, 50 cents a day. A clerk's salary may be \$7.50 a week: a doctor may make \$10. A member of parliament receives \$225 a month; the Prime Minister, only \$375. The weekly wages quoted are not quite as bad as they sound, for home-grown food at least is cheap, but they are bad enough.

The Dalmatian Croats have always been renowned as sailors, and the Yugoslav merchant marine totals the considerable figure of 387,000 tons.

Thus, although Yugoslav living standards were still deplorably low, there were prospects of considerable advances. It was unfortunate that the peasant problem was even more emphatic here because of natural variations. The Croat peasant in the river plains has fertile land and can prosper; in some Serbian areas the peasant works hard and makes a living; in others he works just as hard and scarcely exists.

Communications are poor, and commerce is badly organized. Yet, with twenty years of peace internally and externally, Yugoslavia has great possibilities.

#### XIV

At the outbreak of war in 1939, therefore, Yugoslavia's position was not easy. Hungary and Bulgaria had territorial claims, as had

the Albanians, then under Italian rule. The Little Entente had been killed by the seizure of Czechoslovakia, but the Balkan Pact still held. The German economic grip was severe—over half Yugoslavia's exports and imports were involved. Internally there was much dissension. The Communist element, as usual influential beyond its numbers, followed blindly the current Russian policy of appeasement of Germany. Serbs and Croats still suspected each other—the new agreement had not yet had time to prove its worth: there were men both inside and outside Yugoslavia who did not intend it to work. And in Italy and Hungary the Ustachi planned to plunge the country into civil war.

The natural tendency was towards neutrality. Yugoslavia was almost surrounded by potential enemies. The collapse of France was more than a shock. If strong powers could not stand up to Germany, what would be the chances of a small power weakened by internal dissension?

Torn with doubts, and far away from political or military aid, Yugoslavia stumbled along the "crocodile" path which enabled Hitler to take his victims one by one.

Early in 1941 the pattern of the German plan became clear. The failure of the Italians in Greece must be redeemed: the Balkans must come under Axis domination. For the attack on Greece, the Yugoslav railways were essential. Intense pressure was applied to Yugoslavia. The government has been commonly described as pro-German. It is more correct to say that it was desperately afraid of Germany. How could so small a country fight against such a powerful foe?

Hitler's terms were accepted. On March 25, 1941, Yugoslavia signed the Three Power Pact. German "hospital trains" were to run over her railways: all anti-Axis propaganda was to be suppressed, and her economy was to be "co-ordinated" with that of the Axis. In return for these services, Yugoslavia was to receive the Greek port of Salonika.

The Yugoslav government had been divided, but the people were almost of one mind. A popular revolt, led by the Serbian section of the army and by the Patriarch, overthrew the govern-

ment, deposed Prince Paul, the Regent, and placed the young King Peter on the throne. General Simovitch became Prime Minister. Dr. Matchek had been a member of the overthrown government, and had voted for the signature of the German pact, but in the emergency, and apparently with some reluctance, he resumed his post as Deputy Prime Minister; but even at that stage his overwhelming idea was to make some accommodation with the Axis and to avoid war, which was bound to lay waste his beloved Croatia.<sup>1</sup>

The gallantry of the Yugoslav stand aroused the admiration of the world: Mr. Churchill reflected it when he declared that the nation had found its soul.

For Yugoslavia was doomed. At this time Russia and the United States were neutrals; Britain was fighting alone, desperately, for her own existence—there was not the possibility of the slightest effective help to Yugoslavia. The strategic situation was desperate—long frontiers exposed to enemy attack. The Yugoslav people made their choice in the full knowledge that terror, death, and famine inevitably followed from their decision.

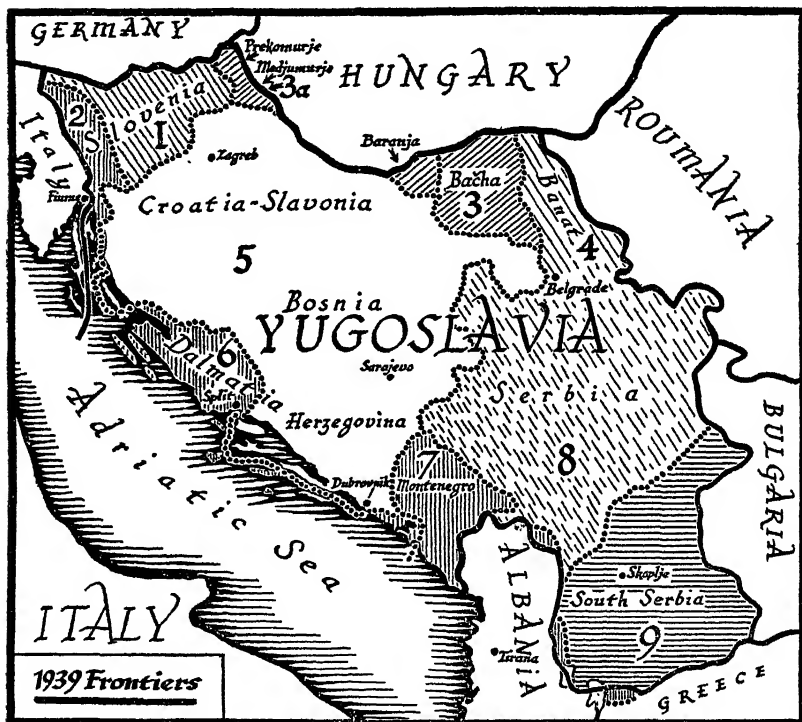
The moment of crisis saw one dramatic event, casting its shadow before. Since the beginning of the war Russia had stood aside, but knew quite well in which direction German ambitions lay. With Britain smashed and the Balkans and Near East in German occupation, the Russian situation would have been dangerous. On the very day of the German attack, a pact between Russia and Yugoslavia was signed in Moscow. It did not provide for military assistance; but, if either were attacked, the other was pledged "to preserve its policy of friendship."

The campaign was brief, but terrible. Belgrade, a defenceless city, was ruthlessly bombed, and 12,000 men, women, and children were killed. Not all the bloody history of the Balkans can equal the storm of terror which swept Yugoslavia. In one village

<sup>1</sup> His newspaper published an editorial on April 1, 1941, four days after the Belgrade revolution, which read: "It is madness and suicidal to abandon the Axis. Yugoslavia's only salvation from a political, economic, and military point of view is to go with the Axis."



all the boys of the school were marched to execution with their masters; the smaller boys pathetically held their exercise books in front of their faces as if to ward off the German bullets. Gas chambers, usually employed to destroy lice, were now pressed into service for wholesale massacre. We are rightly appalled at



THE DISMEMBERMENT OF YUGOSLAVIA, 1941

1. Northern Slovenia, annexed by Germany. 2. Southern Slovenia, annexed by Italy. 3. Backa and Baranja, with 3a, annexed by Hungary. 4. Banat, "reserved" by Germany. 5. Croatia-Slavonia, a "kingdom" under Italian protection. 6. Dalmatia, annexed by Italy. 7. Montenegro, another "kingdom" under Italian protection. 8. The rump kingdom of Serbia, under German domination. 9. South Serbia, allocated to Bulgaria, except for two small districts, added to Albania.

After the collapse of Italy, Northern Dalmatia was added to the "kingdom" of Croatia. Later, Istria was also added—after the Partisans had occupied it! The idea behind this generosity was to hand over to the puppet Croat government a larger area of hostile country for police duty.

the destruction of the Czech village of Lidice: Yugoslavia could produce a hundred equally pitiful examples.

Five armies marched into Yugoslavia: German, Italian, Hungarian, Roumanian, and Bulgarian. Of these, only the Roumanians in their brief incursion behaved like human beings and left no bitter feelings behind them: we must remember this to their credit.

Immediately the mutilation of Yugoslavia began—the map on page 208 shows how the country was broken up. Slovenia was divided into two portions, the northern half absorbed into Greater Germany, the southern seized by Italy. The Slovenes bitterly resented their fate, and from this lovely mountain region have come continuous stories of sabotage and rebellion, with a consequent reign of terror, massacre, and deportation.

In the first six months of the new régime over 150,000 Slovenes had been herded out of their province into the rump Yugoslavia, already devastated and half starving. An intense policy of denationalization has been followed in both parts of the unhappy mountain province. The use of the Slovene language has been proclaimed a crime. The German admission has been brutally frank: Northern Slovenia is German land and always will be. Hence the necessity to expel its inhabitants and resettle the country with Germans.

Croatia, with enlarged boundaries, was formed into a "kingdom" under Italian protection. The chosen king was the Duke of Spoleto—who was so confident of his throne that two years later he had not even visited his kingdom! In this at least he was prudent. The whole scheme, of course, was but a camouflaged annexation of the province by Italy. The quisling premier of the puppet kingdom was a specimen of his class even more disgusting than most. Ante Pavelitch was a Croat nationalist, a lawyer by profession; when in 1921 the centralized form of government was adopted, he decided to fight for an independent Croatia—and to stop at nothing. He set up a terrorist organization called the Ustachi ("the insurgents"): it might be called a Balkan I.R.A. Its proclaimed objective was an independent Croatia, but as it was

financed from German, Italian, and Hungarian resources it was naturally suspect in Yugoslavia. In any case, it did not believe in discussion; its arguments were bombs and bullets, or daggers in the back.

As we have seen, it was Pavelitch and his gang who organized the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia. Pavelitch was sentenced to death by the French courts, but he was in Italy and Mussolini refused to surrender him to justice: wisely, perhaps, for had he talked there would have been sensations in Europe. For years he wandered between Rome and Berlin, constantly stirring up strife in Croatia. Now, after an experience almost wholly confined to the organization of assassination, he found himself Prime Minister of Croatia.

(Dr. Matchek went to Zagreb at the outbreak of war to be among his own people as the blow fell. Pavelitch invited him to join his government, but Matchek declined. He was interned under "house arrest" conditions on his own estate near Zagreb, but was subsequently removed to Graz as there was a suspicion that the Italians were about to kidnap him.)

King Peter and his government removed to England, to carry on the fight as best they could. There seemed little they could do: no country ever received as paralysing a blow as had Yugoslavia. Hitler boasted of the sudden and devastating power of his campaign, which had conquered a country in ten days. He would have been well advised to have read something of the history of the Serbs.

In Belgrade a puppet government was installed, headed by General Neditch. He was no quisling of the Pavelitch type—in November, 1940, when a Yugoslav town was bombed "by mistake" by Italian planes, he had proposed a campaign to drive the Italians out of Albania before the Germans arrived. But, once his country was conquered, he agreed to collaborate with the victors. He had lost faith in Allied victory and in Yugoslav unity. He was misguided, but his dominant idea was probably to save as much as possible of Serbia from the wreck.

## XV

There was to follow one of the most heroic and tragic episodes in the long story of Serbian valour.

Although the Yugoslav army was overwhelmed, small groups of men retired to the wild mountains of the south, where the Germans could not round them up: especially to Montenegro, where not even the Turks had ever been able to penetrate.

In the summer of 1941 an invigorating phrase passed along the Serbian valleys: "The Chetniks are out again." The Chetniks were originally peasant guerrillas who fought against Turkish oppressors: they have become part of the heroic legend of the land, a symbol of national independence. Now they lived once more, to fight a new and more terrible enemy.

Their leader was a regular officer, Draga Mihailovitch. He was the son of a Serbian village schoolmaster, fought in the continuous war from 1912 to 1918, was three times decorated for gallantry, but finished up only as a lieutenant. His trouble was that he had too many original ideas, and this gift seldom brings rapid promotion.

By 1930 he was Professor of Tactics at Belgrade Military College: then he went to Sofia as military attaché, and incurred official displeasure because of his friendship with Bulgarian patriots—including Kosta Teodorov, the Free Bulgarian leader now in America.

Early in 1941 Mihailovitch submitted a memorandum to the Yugoslav General Staff. When the Germans attacked, he argued, the northern plains should be abandoned and the Yugoslav army should fight in the mountains. He received the usual reward for being right!

Mihailovitch was one of the fifty officers who signed the manifesto which overthrew the Yugoslav government which had signed the Axis pact. On the rapid defeat of his country, he rallied the remnants of the beaten army; his force consisted of soldiers, peasants, professors, priests—and women. All the Yugoslav races, including Bulgars, were represented in his forces, but the majority

of his men were Serbs. Later, he was joined by Albanian guerrillas. The official name of his force was the *Yugoslovenska Vojska*—the Yugoslav Army; but the popular name *četnice*, or Chetniks (“men of the companies”), is more familiar.

Mihailovitch might reasonably be compared in his ideas with De Gaulle. He refused to accept defeat, and improvised an army of resistance. He fought with the few weapons his men had been able to salvage from defeat. He raided communications, ambushed German and Italian forces—an improvised and spontaneous uprising rather than a planned campaign. Local peasants supplied him with food; local authorities ignored the orders of the puppet government at Belgrade. Very soon Mihailovitch had 50,000 men at his command. Most of them he dismissed to their villages—he could only feed a few thousand. And he had not a single tank or heavy gun with which to fight the Axis armies.

The German response probably affected the original plans of Mihailovitch. The invaders could not compete with the skill of the Chetniks in guerrilla mountain warfare, so they retaliated on civilians. If the Chetniks raided a village and killed a dozen soldiers, the Germans burned it down and murdered all its men, women, and children. At this rate, the Germans argued, Mihailovitch would turn his own country into a dead land.

The Chetnik leader pondered on the situation—by this time he was in touch with Allied military quarters, and decided to follow our advice to the people of occupied countries. He would harass the occupying troops where he could, but his principal task was to prepare the way for the coming of British troops—at that time Britain had no major allies, but plenty of faith. He would organize a patriot army ready to fight beside the British at the right moment.

The decision was sane enough, but was to lead to many difficulties. Marxian Communism had never been very strong in the Balkans despite the racial and sentimental ties with Russia. But there was a hunger among the landless peasants for their own land, for co-operative organization rather than state socialism. All my readers who know peasant Europe will appreciate that land-

hunger is the dominating force. These landless peasants called themselves Communists, though few of them would have agreed on a definition of the term. Their leaders were mostly of the class usually called "intellectuals."

They had followed Comintern guidance and had contributed to their country's weakness against German encroachments. The Russian-Yugoslav pact came too late to alter their ideas. Now, in the aftermath of defeat, new possibilities were presented.

Hundreds of thousands of dispossessed Serbian peasants from Croatia and Macedonia were crowded into the pitiful rump of Serbia. They wandered helplessly, on the verge of famine. They had no leaders—for the moment.

Then the German attack on Russia galvanized the Yugoslav Communists into activity. They formed their own armed bands, the Partisans. They seized Serbian villages, collectivized the farms, and "eliminated" peasants who would not agree with them. In October, 1941, the Partisan leaders set up three "Soviet Republics"—at Uzice, in Eastern Serbia; Bihać, in Bosnia; and Nikšić, in Montenegro. They only lasted a few weeks. The Partisan rank and file did not want collective farms, but land of their own. Further, the local peasants strongly objected—naturally enough—and reprisals were stern. Peasants who would not obey government orders to attack the Chetniks moved willingly enough to the defence of their own lands against the Partisans. The confusion was desperate. It was almost a civil war between the original residents of the rump Serbia and their brothers exiled from the provinces. Chetniks fought Partisans—the Chetniks were also peasants, though not dispossessed peasants. No man knew where he stood. Some Serbian villages actually invited the Germans to protect them against the Partisans!

Even the composition of the two guerrilla forces was hopelessly mixed. The natural instinct of the Serb was to fight against the invader: if there was a rebel band in his district, he joined it without asking questions. The Germans consistently refer to the Partisans as "Communists." Some of the leaders and personnel are, but the majority of the guerrillas are not: they are ordinary

people, fighting for the freedom of their country. To a Serb, in particular, "freedom" means the absence of a foreign conqueror.

The Germans capitalized the quarrel. To initiate discord, they organized bands of pseudo-Chetniks and pseudo-Partisans. The effects became so serious that in July, 1943, Mihailovitch issued a special repudiation of the "quisling Chetniks" who, pretending to belong to his organization, were actually organized *and armed* by the Axis to fight against the Partisans!

At one period there were twelve organized patriot forces in Yugoslavia, with innumerable small local bands. Some of these gave a nominal allegiance to Mihailovitch, but acted independently. Many of them were entirely of Serbian composition; they called themselves Chetniks, but their principal hate was for the Croat Ustachis rather than the Germans. The Croats were undoubtedly murdering thousands of Serbs; in the Balkans retaliation and revenge are inherited traditions.

The confusion was heightened by contradictory news. The exploits of the Chetniks were recorded by the official Yugoslav government, while those of the Partisans were proclaimed by the "Free Yugoslav Radio"—which actually operates from Tiflis, in Russia! Its news of military events in Yugoslavia was generally accurate, though often exaggerated in its phrasing, but its views did not necessarily represent Yugoslav opinions. One communiqué described a "fierce and bloody" battle between Partisan and German divisions, which lasted for several days. But at its end, the Partisans claimed that the German casualties were twenty killed and thirty-five prisoners!

Further, the Free Yugoslav Radio tends to give a misleading picture of Partisan strength by its reference to divisions and other military formations. In practice, the Partisan leaders divided the whole of Yugoslavia into districts, each of which was to furnish a "division." Some of these "divisions" consist of three thousand men—and others of no more than two or three hundred.

The exaggerations are regrettable because, in the long run, they tend to discount appreciation of the fighting achievements of the Partisans, which have been magnificent in difficult circumstances.

After months of desultory combat against the common enemy and against each other, the situation of the Yugoslav patriots became clarified—Yugoslav, because both guerrilla forces included Serb, Croat, and Slovene elements. Mihailovitch was fighting the national battle: he declared for a democratic Yugoslavia, free from foreign control, but Croats and Slovenes suspected that he favoured a Great Serbia rather than a federal Yugoslavia. The Partisan leaders were intent on social revolution, though many in their ranks were scarcely interested in such theories when all liberty was suppressed—they seized the nearest chance of striking against the oppressor.

Early in 1942 Mihailovitch was made Minister of War by the exiled Yugoslav government—a purely formal appointment, but an appreciation of his importance and of his gallant fight. The Germans had begun to realize that his bands had more than a nuisance value: twice they tried to persuade him to come to terms, and each time they failed. At one period, however, the Italians and Chetniks did adopt a kind of informal armistice—the Italians were not anxious to fight, many of them were actually pro-Ally, and the guerrillas needed time for reorganization. Mihailovitch was very short of arms and especially ammunition. He used the quiet season by organizing periodic raids, capturing Italian prisoners—and holding them to ransom against payment in arms and ammunition!

In the summer of 1942 the threat to the Axis hold on the Balkans became more severe, and Germans and Italians launched serious operations. Mihailovitch avoided pitched battle: he fought a guerrilla war. In the spring of 1943 the Germans made a significant offer: if he would revert to the position of two years earlier, and join the Three Power Pact, then Yugoslav unity should be restored!

Mihailovitch declined. A second expedition marched into the guerrilla country, but was unsuccessful. Thereupon the Germans launched a vicious propaganda campaign against him!

The Russians, naturally, had always favoured the Partisans. Indeed some of the original Partisan bands were organized by



Soviet agents, dropped by parachute at great risk. Their leader in the summer of 1943 was a Croat Communist, Josip Brozovitch or Broz, as he is often called, a metal-worker who used the *nom de guerre* of Tito.<sup>1</sup> He was a guerrilla fighter of proved courage—he had served in the Austrian army in the last war, and then in the Russian Revolutionary War. During the Spanish Civil War he was clever and adaptable in building up an underground organization for smuggling Communist volunteers into Spain. His orders now were to attack the Axis occupying forces, continuously, to hold down the largest possible number of German and Italian divisions, regardless of the shocking reprisals on local villages. Mihailovitch, while constantly harrying the enemy, never exposed his full force. He was looking farther ahead. His army was purely guerrilla: hundreds of men took part in a local operation, then went back to their farms. He continued to adhere to his original plan—organizing a large and widespread force, primarily intended for use when the Allies should land in the Balkans.

The Germans always advertised the Partisans; from their accounts it would have appeared that the Chetniks were not fighting at all. This added to the confusion, for the Yugoslav official accounts frequently gave all the credit of the numerous Partisan attacks to the Chetniks! At the same time the Germans sought to discredit Mihailovitch by suggesting that he was about to make

<sup>1</sup> The designation was also used by his two predecessors in the leadership of the Partisans: the first was a Russian, Lebedef, formerly Counsellor at the Russian Legation at Belgrade—he has now returned to Russia; the second was Kosta Nagy, a Croat Communist of Hungarian origin. Local leaders also used the name: the German accounts revealed their complete confusion—"Tito" seemed to be in a dozen places at the same time!

One interesting suggestion has been made: that the name was adopted from that of Tito Brozovashki, a well known pamphleteer for Croat liberty in Napoleonic days. But the present "Tito" is no pamphleteer, but a fighter.

It is doubtful if this is the real origin of the pseudonym, which may have been intended to designate a movement rather than an individual. One interesting suggestion has been advanced. The original formation of the Partisans was a Comintern activity, and one of its first descriptions was as the *Treća Internacionalna Teroristička Organizacija*, or Third International Terrorist Organization. The initials of the words make up "Tito." This *may* be a coincidence.

(The word "terrorist," by the way, does not mean quite the same thing in the Balkans as in English-speaking countries. It implies a militant revolutionary rather than a gangster.)

terms with them. The Partisan leaders helped in the development of the tragedy by declaring that he *had* made terms. The German policy was obvious: they wished to discredit him, and to make the world believe that their Balkan fight was only against the Partisans—the anti-Bolshevik crusade all over again. German accounts of Balkan fighting persistently refer to the activities of the Partisans—and never mention the Chetniks!

Thus Russian and German propaganda inadvertently supported each other. The *Daily Worker* referred to Mihailovitch as a “notorious pro-Axis intriguer”—rather cool when it is considered that he took up a hopeless fight against the Axis even before Russia was attacked. Other and more influential papers suggested that he “had gone over to the Axis.” On the other hand, other newspapers attacked the Partisans on the erroneous ground that they were entirely Communist. Dr. Goebbels has quite a number of involuntary assistants!

It was admittedly difficult for us to get any substantial supplies to the Yugoslav guerrillas. But even our moral support was not very forceful. Public interest has been sentimental rather than practical: mental laziness has declined the task of attempting to see through Balkan confusion. Mihailovitch made some caustic comments on his strange allies who had shown such little appreciation of his amazing fight under terrible conditions of hardship. Nevertheless, irritation is seldom diplomatic, and his protests tended to lower rather than to raise his status.

The collapse of Italy did something to clarify the situation. All the free peoples of Yugoslavia believed that the hour of liberation was at hand. Anti-Fascist Italians joined them in their battle: others gave up their precious arms. The underground organizations revealed their strength. In Slovenia a former chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Ivan Ribar, had long before rallied his people against the invaders. Leaders of the Croat Peasant Party, Tomasitch and Pavao Krce, have brought out into the open their hidden armies in Croatia and Dalmatia. The Italian surrender left large areas free from enemy occupation, and they were rapidly occupied by the Partisans—sometimes to be lost again, for the

Germans hurried large forces to Yugoslavia, and used their most ruthless measures.

For some time previous to the Italian surrender, British liaison officers had been attached to both Chetnik and Partisan headquarters—for in military quarters, at least, the quality and value of the patriot resistance was recognized. Politically we had endeavoured to reconcile the contestants: our one aim was to defeat Germany—it would be sheer tragedy if the gallant Yugoslav contribution should be wrecked by quarrels between Partisans backed by Moscow and Chetniks backed by a Yugoslav government domiciled in London. We decided to co-operate with both guerilla groups—who, in the main, occupied different geographic areas. The decision was eminently sensible: it would have been much better had the patriot forces been united, but in war perfect conditions seldom prevail and you have to make the best of the bad. Military expediency outweighs most other considerations in a battle of life and death.

In November, 1943—at the very moment when the Teheran Conference was sitting—the Partisans made a serious political move. They proclaimed a National Committee for Liberation, with all the rights and functions of a provisional government. Dr. Ribar was elected president, while Brozovitch, or “Tito,” was confirmed as Commander-in-Chief and promoted to the rank of marshal. Thus the government of King Peter—now domiciled in Cairo—was completely ignored, while Mihailovitch was again called a traitor who collaborated with the Germans. This argument was refuted by the Germans themselves, for they offered a reward of 100,000 gold marks for the body of Mihailovitch, dead or alive—precisely the same sum which they offered for Tito. Indeed, the two men appear together in the same advertisements.

Here is a sample of the political dishonesty which makes it so difficult for public opinion to be formed on an objective basis. A responsible American newspaper, reputed to be liberal in its views, published an article on Yugoslavia, its main burden being that the Partisans were doing all the fighting, while Mihailovitch was doing nothing. In support of this claim, the paper reproduced a

photograph of part of a poster issued by the Germans, offering the reward of 100,000 gold marks for Tito. The part of the poster which was torn off and *not* reproduced offered the same reward for Mihailovitch!

Allied efforts to ease the tension and heal the ill feeling were unsuccessful. They were doomed in advance by our popular unfortunate tendency to take sides without full inquiry, or on the basis of emotional impulses. Since the Partisan leadership is largely Communist, they are automatically right or wrong, according to political ideas or prejudices.

Far more serious is a potential split of opinion among the Allies. The statesmen who gathered at Teheran may have discussed the absurd and tragic position—a provisional government in Yugoslavia, under Communist direction, backed by Russia, and a formal government of Yugoslavia, in exile, recognized by Britain and the United States. The dangers of such a situation are obvious, and it is reasonable to assume that they did not pass unnoticed. Even at that moment, when Allied unity was being firmly proclaimed, Chetniks and Partisans were fighting each other instead of collaborating against the common enemy. The Yugoslav quarrel needs the application of patience, tact, and firmness.

One point is important: the dispute is not merely one between Nationalists and Communists. Mihailovitch, although all his proclamations refer to Yugoslavia, is believed by many Croats to favour Serbian ascendancy; on the other hand the Partisans number a large proportion of Croats among their leaders. This means more in Yugoslavia than any clash of "ideologies." Like most internal Yugoslav problems, it resolves itself into the fundamental dispute between Croats and Serbs.

Mihailovitch was perhaps right when in 1942 he decided to limit active operations lest Yugoslavia should be nothing but one huge graveyard. It seems probable that he misjudged the situation in the autumn of 1943, when the collapse of Italy sent a wave of hope across the land. In the winter of 1941 Yugoslav peasants had formed themselves into anti-Partisan bands, because of their

dread of the terrible German reprisals. Now these same men joined the Partisans. Mihailovitch, a regular officer, apparently overlooked one vital rule of guerrilla warfare: your irregular army must keep on fighting, or it disintegrates. Thousands of his men went over to Tito.

The Partisan leader conducted his campaign with courage and skill, occupying the attention of ten Axis divisions. In December, 1943, he was recognized by the British and American governments as a "full Allied commander," and agreements were made for the supply of military material to him. Our policy was simple. We understood Mihailovitch's earlier attitude, but now the hour of attack had come. We would give our support to anybody who fought against the Germans.

For months we attempted to heal the breach between the rival factions. At one stage (October, 1943) Tito was reported as in negotiation with King Peter. He demanded the dismissal of Mihailovitch and other ministers, and an undertaking that the King would not return to his country until a plebiscite had been held. When these terms were declined, King Peter was dubbed a "traitor" in a savage attack by the Free Yugoslav Radio.

Tito's next move made the breach wider. Other resistance leaders had joined their forces with his, and on November 30, 1943, he announced the formation of a Supreme Council, or Provisional Government, which claimed the right to govern the freed areas of Yugoslavia, disowning King Peter and the émigré government. Dr. Ivan Ribar was elected president, and Tito continued as military leader. Representation was wide: although strongly Left in character, the Provisional Government was by no means Communist—it included many Liberals and Socialists, and it covered the many races and religions of Yugoslavia. Its proclamation was certainly liberal. The federal principle was adopted, with Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia as its units. According to a Russian report, it aimed at the liberation and independence of Yugoslavia, the establishment of personal liberty and of religious freedom: the recognition of the inviolability of personal property

and liberty of private enterprise in industry; the introduction of a progressive and democratic administration, with free elections as soon as possible after victory.<sup>1</sup>

This is not a Communist document. Its recognition of realities suggests the Russian mood of 1943 rather than that of 1919. Certainly it is nearer to the temper and aspirations of the majority of the Yugoslav peoples than the nebulous conservatism of some rival leaders. Of course, proclamations are easily made, but do not always materialize in the spirit of their words, and there are Serbs in particular who are very suspicious. It is the military courage and success of the Partisans, rather than their official pronouncements, which have attracted the fighting races of Yugoslavia into their ranks.

The proclamation of the Provisional Government raised the quarrel to its highest pitch. Each side denounced the other as traitors. Mihailovitch demanded that Tito should submit to his authority as Minister of War. Tito replied very brusquely! The gap between Serb and Croat was already wide enough, but the addition of the "ideological" quarrel complicated the issue. The warmest friends of Yugoslavia, appalled at the fratricidal conflict, could scarcely expect friendly collaboration between a Serbian Nationalist and a Croat Communist!

During the winter of 1943 the situation deteriorated further. Tito gained in strength—for short or long periods he controlled stretches of coast-line, and we were able to send him some military supplies. The Partisan attacks were on a larger scale, and by the spring of 1944 engaged twelve German or satellite divisions. There was no question of any continuous line; this was guerrilla warfare—a series of miniature battles, constant harrying, acts of sabotage, and cutting of communications. The Germans admitted that the Partisan force was more than a nuisance.

Mihailovitch, on the other hand, pursued a defensive policy.

<sup>1</sup> Two months later Mihailovitch held a congress in Southern Yugoslavia; it was widely representative of most political parties, religious bodies, and youth organizations. This also declared in favour of a federal Yugoslavia after victory, with a democratic constitutional parliament. It is at least an advance that practically all parties have now accepted the general principle of federation.

He was annoyed with the British and American governments. He was the man who had first resisted, he pointed out—at a time when the Communists were still talking about an “imperialist war.” He was the official and legitimate leader of the Yugoslavs, he claimed—why should we give our support to Tito instead? He complained just as bitterly of Tito’s “treachery” as Tito did of his. There were ugly stories of massacres of adherents told by both sides, and such stories can be exaggerated in moments of passion.

The situation was well summed up in Mr. Churchill’s foreign policy speech of May 24, 1944. He pointed out the danger of violently espousing one of many conflicting causes in a country; our objective was to resolve quarrels, not to aggravate them. He reiterated his policy—to beat the enemy as soon as possible.

This involved maximum aid to those who were doing the fighting—this was not the time for ideological discussions. Thus we have strongly supported Tito, who has fought well and hard. His army includes large numbers of Serbs as well as Croats and Slovenes. Mr. Churchill frankly faced the potential opposition from a “very large body of Serbian peasant proprietors who are anti-German but strongly Serbian, and who naturally hold the views of a peasant ownership community in regard to property, less enthusiastic in regard to Communism than some of those in Croatia or Slovenia. Marshal Tito has largely sunk his Communist aspect in his character as a Yugoslav patriot leader. He repeatedly proclaims he has no intention of reversing the property and social systems which prevail in Serbia, but these facts are not yet accepted by the other side.” This last phrase has some importance.

We have ceased to supply Mihailovitch with arms simply because “he has not been fighting the enemy and, moreover, some of his subordinates have made accommodations with the enemy, from which have risen armed conflicts with the forces of Marshal Tito, accompanied by many charges and counter-charges and the loss of patriot lives to the German advantage.” (This accusation is challenged in Serbian circles, where it is held

that the "subordinates" were the Chetnik commanders of irregular forces who gave only a nominal allegiance to Mihailovitch.) Mr. Churchill said that in the new government likely to be formed Mihailovitch would probably lose his post of Minister of War. This would not rob him of his powerful position locally as Commander-in-Chief, or of his Serbian influence. In this Mr. Churchill was certainly right.

Our policy is plain. "All questions of monarchy or republic and leftist and rightist are strictly subordinate to the main purpose we have in mind. In one place we support a king, in another a Communist—there is no attempt by us to enforce particular ideologies. We only want to beat the enemy, and then, with a happy and serene peace, let the best expression be given to the will of the people in every way."

At a critical stage of the war, few would quarrel with this outlook. As I write, young King Peter is making urgent efforts to form a new government which will represent a united Yugoslavia. His task is immensely difficult. When men have been calling each other traitors for two years, they are not easily reconciled. It may be that we shall be able to help; this happened in Greece, as we shall see. The only link between Tito and Mihailovitch is by means of British and American liaison officers.

It is unfortunate that General Simovitch has been ill—he was the leader of the revolt of the government which surrendered to the German demands in 1941. He still carries a wide influence in Yugoslavia, and we may hear of him again. (For that matter, I doubt if we have heard the last of Mihailovitch, who may now be concentrating on retaining his forces for the critical days of victory.) I should like to be an optimist and say that King Peter will succeed in reconciling the warring factions. I can only say that he faces a colossal task, and wish him well.

Yet even a temporary agreement would be a great advantage. At a suitable moment the Yugoslav people must be given the opportunity of deciding their own destiny: a moment as far detached as reasonable from the passions of war and revenge.

The force of the tragedy is doubled by the appalling plight



of Yugoslavia under Nazi domination. The number of people murdered has been conservatively estimated at 300,000 and may exceed a million. A neutral medical mission reported over 400,000 orphan children: 60 per cent of all children between five and fifteen are smitten with tuberculosis. Most are clothed in rags—doctors reported some of their patients wearing newspapers as clothes. Rations are meagre and monotonous, and prices ridiculously high.

Yugoslavia is indeed a land of "scorched earth." Great areas have been laid waste. Nowhere, except perhaps in Poland and Greece, has German devastation been so thorough. Even the very limited hospital supplies were plundered, so that the Bulgars had to replace them in the areas they occupied. Every quality of courage and persistence has been called from the Yugoslav peoples: they have responded with their usual grim gallantry. Their record would have been magnificent had they behaved as finely to one another as they did to their foreign oppressors.

## XVI

Adversity can act as a great unifier or it can aggravate quarrels. It would be blind optimism to suggest that the Serb-Croat situation is easier than it was in 1938.

The conduct of the Croat Ustachis consists of a mixture of Fascist and Balkan methods: the effect can be imagined. Originally a comparatively small but well organized group, they have been joined by other Croats since they seized power—every country contains its proportion of people anxious to get on the band wagon. About one-third of Dr. Matchek's Peasant Party has gone over to the Ustachi—including practically the whole of his private army, the Peasant Guard. Private armies are always dangerous, and are always susceptible to offers of influence or action.

Worse still, a large number of senior Croat officers of the Yugoslav army and navy have joined Pavelitch—under conditions which suggest that they had been in collusion with him for some

time before the war. Indeed, without internal connivance, it would have been quite impossible for Pavelitch to establish his domination over Croatia so rapidly or so surely—his “occupying army” of Ustachis consisted of only 948 men! This swelled rapidly until it reached (July, 1943) 200,000 men, of whom a proportion were drafted for service against Russia—a Croat division was taken prisoner at Stalingrad—while about 50,000 were employed against the Partisans and Chetniks.

The Ustachi policy is to clear Croatia of Serbs—and their Croatia includes Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the Serbs form an easy majority. Thousands of Serbs have been massacred; tens of thousands of them, driven off their peasant farms, a punishment ranking only slightly below death. The Serbs will have bitter memories: to them the atrocities were committed by Croats, not members of any particular political party. When a Londoner's wife and children are killed by a German bomb, he is not very interested in the question whether the bomb was dropped by a Nazi or a “good” German. The Serbs are no more discriminating.

The Germans, in their policy of dividing all potential opponents, have exploited this situation. General Neditch, the puppet-premier of Serbia, has played into their hands. In 1941 he may have been actuated by a sincere desire to rescue at least a portion of Serbia from catastrophe—at the time, it should be remembered, the prospects of a German victory were very bright. His subsequent collaboration was, however, too eager. He even ordered the remnants of his army to take the field against Mihailovitch. When this failed (many of his troops went over to the Chetniks) and when the Germans and Italians were unable to restore order, Neditch fell in with another German plan. Although not as strong as in Bulgaria, there is a warm regard among the Serbs for the Russians, their big brothers among the Slavs. A Russian general, Vlassov, had gone over to the Axis side, and had recruited a considerable army of volunteers, mostly Ukrainians. Even Hitler dared not order this army to march against the Russians: he used it for police duties in the back areas:

then in the spring of 1943, he moved a section of it into the rump Serbia, to keep order there. The argument was that even Chetniks would not fight against Russians.

Neditch himself is no Yugoslav, but a Serb. "We know what we got from our partnership with our so-called brothers," he declared. "Nothing but a broken back and such disaster as the Serb people has never experienced before. Was there any sincerity, brotherhood, or union in that state [Yugoslavia]? We Serbs made every sacrifice, including our name and our flag, and one million graves. And there are still people who wish to restore Yugoslavia!"

It is important to remember that these views are also held by thousands of other Serbs—not quislings, but men who risk their lives daily in a desperate fight against the German conqueror.

The difficulties have been reflected in the exiled Yugoslav government—formed in Jerusalem, transferred to London, and later to Cairo. Far too often the composition of the government has been changed. In the best circumstances the life of a government in exile is difficult: that of Yugoslavia has been rendered almost impossible by internal dissensions.

The exiled Croats (including Dr. Krnjevitich, Matchek's deputy) have based all their agreements on the Sporazum. Some of them condemn Pavelitch even more roundly than do the Serbs. They abhor his atrocities and repudiate his "annexation" of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They realize that an independent Croatia is quite impracticable—it must be associated in some form with its neighbours: if not with Serbia, it would have to revert to its old association with Hungary, or to seek incorporation in a wider federation. They demand that the Sporazum shall be confirmed until a new constitution for Yugoslavia can be worked out after victory. And they believe that some of the Serb members of the government have no condemnation for Neditch, in spite of his collaboration with the Germans, because he is pursuing a Serbian policy. In short, the Croats suspect that some of the Serbian leaders intend to tear up the Sporazum and revert to centralist control from Belgrade.

Certainly some of the Serb leaders have been too evasive on this vital issue: they have never denounced the Sporazum, but have been lukewarm in their comments. The British public, not understanding the basis of the issue and its importance for the future, has tended to condemn impatiently the whole group of Yugoslav politicians. In Yugoslavia itself the disunity among the political exiles has had most unfortunate effects, tending to emphasize Serb and Croat differences rather than to keep alive the Yugoslav idea.

There are few Serbs today who do not accept the idea that Yugoslavia can only exist and prosper as a federal state; the number of Croats cannot be much larger. Yet even such agreement on principle does not exhaust the difficulties. Most Croats, still afraid of being outnumbered in the federal government, want to see a state which would include not only Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, but Bosnia, Montenegro, Herzegovina, and Voivodina—that is to say, they wish the Serbs to be split into local bodies. Some Serbs oppose this idea; accepting federation, they see only the three constituent states of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia.

Certainly the Sporazum needs amendment. It gave the Croat Peasant Party dictatorial rights in its own area—where hundreds of thousands of Serbs were settled. At the same time, the Croats held a disproportionate share of government posts at Belgrade, where they decided not only Yugoslav foreign and defence policy, but the provincial affairs of Serbia. Thus the Serbs had no voice in the control of Croatia, but the Croats had a voice in the control of Serbia. This obvious anomaly can only be ended by frank and full federation—with three or more constituent provinces based upon racial or geographic unity, each with its own powers of local government, and each sending representatives to a federal parliament which will decide important matters of general concern.

I repeat that the Serbo-Croat issue is *not* easier than it was in 1939—and then it was intensely difficult. When the Germans launched their attack, some Croat regiments resisted gallantly. Others, led by their officers, went over to the Ustachis. Serbian

peasants naturally hear a good deal more about the latter than about the former—vice has always a higher publicity value than virtue. The admiral commanding the Yugoslav fleet was a Croat: he was instructed by the British Admiralty to sail to North Africa: instead, he ordered all his ships to Šibenik, where they were handed over to the Germans. Events like this have added to Serbian bitterness.

The intrusion of the Communist theme, which has become popularly but erroneously associated with the Croats, has further intensified ill feeling, and, in some foreign quarters, has led to the quite unwarrantable assumption that all Serbs are automatically reactionaries! Above all, the pitiless Ustachi persecution of the Serbs in Croatia has aroused passions which will not subside in a night.

Yet Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes have to live side by side and in peace. Unless there is a settlement in Yugoslavia, there will never be a settlement in the Balkans. The strained situation demands most urgent attention, and nothing that disinterested friends can do should be left undone.

The course of battle, with Serbs and Croats fighting side by side, may do something to relieve the situation. Too many people—in Britain as well as in Serbia—have identified the Croats with the Ustachi: if this were true, there would never be a revived Yugoslavia. The fight of the Croat peasants has revealed its falsity. Every country had its Fascist element: there was one in Britain and in the United States and, if the circumstances had permitted it, it would have acted exactly as the Ustachi did in Croatia; further, some additional recruits might have jumped on to the band wagon!

It is late in the day to retrieve the situation, but it is vital that this should be done. The fighting patriots of Yugoslavia need and deserve the clearest possible definition of the kind of country they are fighting for. Chetniks and Partisans can collaborate in deed and spirit only if they are fighting for the same thing. Were the Serb-Croat difficulties to override the greater issues, the result would be disastrous: a Serbian-Orthodox state and a Croat-Slo-

vene Catholic state, with a mixed province of Bosnia as a bone of contention! Such a calamity would precipitate Axis policy well into the future, and would lay the Balkans open for outside interference. A federal, tolerant, and democratic Yugoslavia is vital to the peace and development of the Balkans as well as to the happiness and security of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The necessary confidence cannot be born and developed in a day, but a firm and united declaration, backed by the unifying influence of common suffering and the common fight, would lay a solid foundation for a firm edifice, calculated to weather the violent storms which certainly lie ahead.

It would be tragic if the opportunity of conciliation were missed. The lament of Kossovo is beautiful poetry, but it tends to concentrate on disaster and death.

The maiden of Kossovo rose early  
On the Sabbath morning, sooner than sunrise,  
And sadly walked over the battlefield  
Where the glorious Tsar Lazar had fallen.  
In the blood-pools she turned round the heroes,  
And if she found still one of them breathing  
She bathed him gently with clear cold water;  
As sacrament she gave him the red wine,  
And fed him with small crumbs of white bread. . . .

So reads Dr. Seton-Watson's classic translation. Yet in the southern valleys of Serbia there is a traditional dance: as the girls move in a circle, they chant:

On the plain of Kossovo,  
On the field of Kossovo,  
They are fighting, they are fighting.  
Come out and unite with us:  
On the plain of Kossovo,  
On the field of Kossovo.

Today they are again fighting on the plain of Kossovo. The essential call is for unity. "Why do you quarrel among yourselves, as your fathers did at Kossovo?" runs a Serbian proverb. Chetniks and Partisans alike call to their fellows, "Come out

and unite with us." Failing that unity, it may once again be necessary for the maiden to succour the dying heroes. The motto of the Serbian Black Hand organization in 1914 was "Unity or Death." It is still a very apt slogan.

# 5

## ALBANIA

### I

WHEN I WANDERED about Albania in 1935, I made one journey across the high mountains in the north. The authorities insisted that I should have an armed escort, as the district was "unsettled." In addition, two armed police accompanied me on a beat of ten miles, when they handed me over to the next pair. The newcomers had to sign a document as they took over. I discovered that it read: "*Received, one Englishman, alive!*"

Albania is the youngest country of the Balkans, but its people are the oldest. They are probably the descendants of the ancient Thracians and Illyrians; their language, despite infusions of words from neighbouring races, is quite unlike any other Balkan tongue. At one time they occupied the whole of the Southern Balkans, and were a vigorous and dynamic people: Alexander the Great is claimed to have been of Albanian origin. Gradually they were encompassed in their present home, much as the Basques were crowded into their Biscayan corner, by the tribes surging from the east; or as the remnants of the British tribes were pushed westward into the mountains of Wales.

A mere forty miles across the Adriatic from Italy, it was inevitable that the area we now call Albania should be absorbed in the Roman Empire. On its collapse, the land was invaded by successive waves of Goths, Serbs, Bulgars, Greeks, Venetians, Sicilians, and even Normans. Most of the invaders controlled the coastal zone only, while the natives retired to their mountain fastnesses. Their numbers were too small to offer open battle to well equipped armies, and they were organized in clans, generally quarrelling among themselves.



Then, in 1431, the Turks advanced. The Albanians, under the new menace, united under a tribal chief: George Kastrioti was his name, but he is perhaps more famous as Skanderbeg: he is a national hero of legendary fame. Byron sang his praises in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The Turks esteemed him, too. After his death, they broke into his grave and wore his bones as amulets! Yet his brave struggle failed, as it was bound to do.

For generations the Albanians rose in periodic revolt: over the high mountain area the Turkish rule was very shadowy. Many Albanians never even saw a Turk. They lived in their isolated valleys, raiding a neighbouring tribe occasionally for plunder, and refusing to pay taxes—they generally murdered the tax collectors sent by the Turks. Any official who volunteered for duty in Albania was held to have committed suicide.

Then the Turks altered their policy: instead of squads of aggressive soldiers, they sent Moslem missionaries. The hold of Christianity on the simple tribesmen was slight, and many of them accepted the new faith—on the lead of their chiefs, who saw an opportunity of retaining their power. Their argument was sound: many of the tribal chiefs became local Turkish rulers—and the life of the clan was scarcely affected by any change.

The rise of nationalist ideas in the Balkans in the nineteenth century affected even the very parochial outlook of Albania. There were periodic risings; most of these were tribal rather than national, so they were easily suppressed. But in 1912 there was a more general revolt: the Turkish crescent was already on the wane, and new stars appeared on the horizon, suggesting the approach of danger. Serbia and Greece both had territorial ambitions: some of these were quite legitimate, but the others included the partition of Albania. The Albanians determined to anticipate such a move, and on November 28, 1912, they proclaimed their independence.

The incident nearly served as the occasion for the first European war. The Albanians had been encouraged by Austria-Hungary and Italy, but their action was strongly opposed by Russia and France. Again the Great Powers were using the Balkan states

as their tools, always seeking their own advantage—or the discomfiture of their opponents. The position was so serious that Britain stepped in as arbitrator. A Conference of Ambassadors was held in London, and on July 29, 1913, Albania was declared an independent state.

It was customary in those days to impose a king on a new country, whether he was wanted or not, and the innumerable princelings of Germany could always supply suitable candidates. Prince William of Wied was selected for the post: he soon found that his position was very uncomfortable, and at the outbreak of war he returned to Germany. He did *not* abdicate, so legally he may perhaps still claim to be the King of Albania.

During the 1914–18 war confusion reigned: for some time the Austrians occupied the northern half of Albania, the Italians the south. Yet the newly aroused national consciousness could not be dimmed. In December, 1918, a National Assembly was elected; Albania sent a delegation to the Peace Conference, and prepared to face the task of establishing the new state.

The difficulties were enormous: major problems abounded. But before we consider them we should take a glance at the land and its people.

## II

One day Albania may rival Switzerland as the playground of Europe. Its mountains, topping 8,500 feet, cannot compare with the Swiss Alps in size, but I never saw a finer panorama than that of Northern Albania. Its valleys are high and secluded; connected with the outside world only by mule-tracks. Thus, many Albanians still live as their forefathers did centuries ago.

There are two racial divisions. Across the middle of the country runs the little river Skumbri; the tribes to the north are called Ghegs, to the south Tosks. The Tosks are the more advanced; their land, poor enough, is at least more fertile than that farther north; the mountains and the passes are lower, so that cultural ideas have flowed in from without. But both tribes are very tough

—the Turks considered the Albanians as the finest fighters in the world. The Gheg highlanders are magnificent physical specimens, averaging nearly six feet in height, and of powerful and wiry build.

Only 8 per cent of the land is arable, and not all of this repays cultivation. The standard of living is very low. The common diet consists largely of cornbread and sour milk—except on a feast day, when a sheep may be killed and roasted on the spit.

In their simple way the tribal valleys are almost self-supporting: this is certainly an advantage. I was able to hire a hefty porter for 30 cents a day. For this he carried my pack and rifle for forty kilometres, and then turned round to walk home. Clothing is home-made and not very artistic. The natural resources of the country are small: there are some minerals, still undeveloped, a little oil, and considerable forest-land. The narrow coastal plain produces the usual Mediterranean fruits—olives, lemons—wines, tobacco, and even rice, but is unfortunately very malarious.

Organization centres on the tribe and the family. It is founded on the Laws of Lek, an Albanian Moses who flourished hundreds of years ago. Despite attempts at modernization, the Laws of Lek are still sacred in the high Albanian valleys. The head of the family exercises a very real power—he votes for the entire family!

Usually the complete male side of the family lives in one house—the old folks, five or six sons with their wives and children. I encountered as many as sixty people occupying a single house, sleeping in one room on bracken spread over the floor.

The appearance of the Albanian farmhouse is peculiar. The building is of grey stone, and has very tiny windows. These were not primarily inserted for light or ventilation, but for battle! The family house of the Albanians was first and foremost a fortress.

Its character, like most features of Albanian civilization, is based on the Laws of Lek. This in turn derives from the Law of Moses, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." In a land where there was no justice, men made their own. Yet the vendetta had its rules, carefully regulated by Lek: it was not merely a kind of wild justice. Women, children, and strangers were exempt from

its ravages: as was a male enemy so long as he was in their company. On the other hand, the feud involved *all* members of the family. According to the Law of Lek it was a matter not of revenge, but of honour. If you harmed me, my honour was sullied, but if you killed my brother, the honour of my family was offended. The offence could only be purged in blood.

Nevertheless, I might arrange a truce with my enemy. Through an intermediary friend, we could swear a *besa*, or oath, that we would not harm each other's family for the period of the harvest, or on a feast day. The *besa* was sacred: the man who broke it was an outcast. In Albania murder was accounted as a minor sin compared with the broken word.

I met one girl who wore trousers and carried a rifle. When all the male members of a family have been wiped out in a feud, the eldest unmarried girl must become the "man" of the house, renouncing marriage for ever.

Marriages, incidentally, are arranged by families for the children; the ill-effects of inbreeding were recognized by Lek; a girl always marries outside her tribe, which is really one big family; at sixteen the youth goes to demand his bride, taking the purchase price—a cow, or four sheep.

The girl is not forced to marry him; she usually does, since she has been brought up on the idea—even if she never sees him until her wedding-day. But if she does not wish to marry him, then she must not marry anybody else. If she did, then the honour of the first youth would be outraged. Following the Laws of Lek, he would shoot the girl's husband, so that she would become a widow before the end of her honeymoon!

These survivals of a cruder age, I have said, are relics of days when there was no law, and they are rapidly disappearing. Other aspects of the Laws of Lek are more pleasing. I saw a meeting of a tribal council, before which disputants appeared. I was impressed by the way in which the council, having made its decisions, *persuaded* the two men to accept it. They gave their *besa*, or bond, and the dispute was settled for ever.

The vendetta persisted among the Ghegs long after the Tosks

had adopted more modern methods of social justice. In the south life is easier: Greek influence has infiltrated—Tosk highlanders in some districts wear the Greek skirts. About 11 per cent of the population have adopted the Greek Orthodox religious persuasion; 19 per cent, mostly in the north, are Roman Catholics; the remaining 70 per cent are Moslems, taking their religion seriously—many of the women still wear the veil. The diversity of religions led to one interesting result: confronted with the poser as to which set of religious holidays should be adopted, the Albanians decided to take them all! With a few national feast days added the allotment is generous.

The towns of Albania are not as important as the mountain valleys. Tirana, the capital, is a strange mixture of modern boulevards and narrow Turkish alleys: outside a modern government office sits a public letter-writer, who will work for the illiterate at a modest fee: telephone wires are attached to the walls of ancient mosques. Koritza is the principal industrial area—the “Manchester of Albania”—but its population is only 23,000. Durazzo, the principal port, is an unimpressive place on the malarial plain, and its harbour rapidly silts up. Other towns are picturesque rather than important: Elbasan, in the geographical centre, would become a tourists’ paradise were it more readily accessible.

The population of the entire country is only one million. Another half-million Albanians live just outside of the frontiers of their country. Tens of thousands emigrated to Italy during the years of Turkish dominance. Their descendants have been partly assimilated, their standard of living is higher, and they present no problem. The Albanians in the adjacent areas of Yugoslavia do.

### III

The story of Albania during the last score of years is that of a personality. This was almost inevitable: unless the loose tribal bonds had been strengthened, Albania must have died.

In 1920, in the midst of the post-war confusion, a Yugoslav army invaded Albania, and penetrated to the Mati valley, in the

heart of the country. The tribal chief of the Mati clan was a young man named Ahmed Zogu, then Home Secretary of Albania. He had been educated at Turkish military school, and had seen something of war. When the Yugoslavs arrived, he was away on duty, but his mother called the clansmen to arms and held the invaders at bay until he arrived to drive them back.

Next the Italians gave trouble. They had seized the southern Albanian port of Valona, where they now found themselves besieged. Albanian guerrillas broke through the defences at will, shot up Italian guards, and disappeared. The Italians were glad to evacuate Valona—but they still held the adjacent island of Suisio.

Ahmed Zogu was the man of the hour. Jealousy between the clans had always been a feature of Albanian life, but he rallied a considerable number of tribesmen behind him—they were tired of the old men who contrived to use antiquated Turkish methods of government. Zogu became Prime Minister, then President. In 1928 he declared himself King of Albania, taking as his title Zog I.<sup>1</sup>

Zog was energetic as well as ambitious. His greatest difficulties came from other tribal chiefs and their jealousy of his rise; there were frequently petty insurrections. On the whole, however, his rule became stabilized, and his control of Albania was more real than that of any other ruler had been for a thousand years. He worked energetically for the modernization of his little land. With the aid of a remarkable corps of British officers he organized an efficient *gendarmerie*. He struck a decisive blow at the devastating vendetta by the establishment of a working system of justice. His army was trained by Italians, and schools and public buildings were built—with Italian money—and new roads, primarily of military importance, connecting the principal towns, and radiating to the Yugoslav frontier. For the first time in its history, Albania enjoyed the advantages of an educational sys-

<sup>1</sup> The local name of Albania is the Land of the Eagles; *zog* is the Albanian word for "bird": thus his title ran literally, Bird the First: King of the Land of the Eagles.

tem—primitive and primary, but intended as a basis for development.

A little country like Albania, poor and penniless, obviously needed a paternal benefactor. Zog turned to Britain, but she was not interested. Yugoslavia and Greece were counted as the hereditary enemies of his land—and, in any case, needed assistance themselves. Italy was the only power willing and able to give the help the country needed so badly.

The price was high, and Zog struggled continuously against overreaching Italian intervention. But in 1926 his hand was forced. Faced with a rebellion more serious than usual, he turned to Mussolini for help. It was given—at a price. Italy acquired the right to intervene in Albania's internal or external affairs whenever the latter so requested.

The following years were spent by Zog in attempts to lessen Italian influence. A customs union was rejected in 1932, and two years later he attempted to control Italian commercial penetration and to remove Italian officers and instructors from the Albanian army. Mussolini's reply was a naval demonstration off the Albanian coast.

Then a strange scene was played. Without official appeal, Albanian tribesmen streamed from their mountain valleys, ready to defy the whole might of Italy!

Nevertheless, in succeeding years Italy's influence was strengthened again. Albania's oil and metal resources were entirely under her control; Italian officers trained the Albanian army, and a firm alliance was made. Apparently Italy had everything she could possibly want.

On April 5, 1939, there was wild rejoicing in Albania. Singing and cheering crowds mobbed King Zog's modest palace in Tirana, and in the wild valleys highlanders discharged their rifles in a *feu de joie*. Always his subjects had looked to him to marry and found a dynasty. There were difficulties, for Zog was a Moslem, and not every noble family would consider such an alliance. But a year earlier the king had delighted his country by taking as his wife a lady of distinguished family, half Hungarian and half

American. And now she had duly presented him with a son and heir. Here was the one thing needful to consolidate Albania—the certainty of succession after centuries of unrest.

The new prince was two days old when his inheritance was rudely stolen from him. On Good Friday Italian troops landed without warning. Resistance was desultory—the Albanian army totalled only 12,000 men—and within a week Albania was overrun. King Zog and his invalid queen made a precarious journey over the unfriendly mountains to seek refuge in Greece.

The Italian apologia declared that Albania was occupied because King Zog had proposed that Italy should send troops to Albania for the purpose of attacking Yugoslavia! No one outside Italy, and not many people inside, attached any credence to this fantastic plea. The real reason was that Italy was attempting to force King Zog into a closer collaboration than he or his people wished, and that he adopted his attitude of 1931. The moment of 1939, however, was sterner and morals lower, and he was promptly bundled off his throne. It was given out that Italy had been invited to take Albania under her protection, and a new government of Albanian "Patriots" was set up—most of them were Zog's opponents, including the aforesaid jealous tribal chiefs. A few days later, in the fashion of these things, all pretence of Albanian autonomy was dropped and the initial promises forgotten. An Italian lieutenant-general ruled the land with the assistance of an army of 70,000 men. As a measure of assurance, part of the Albanian army was removed to Italy. Branches of the Fascist party were formed throughout Albania, and the Italian legal and penal codes were introduced immediately. Albania became, in fact, no more than an Italian province.

This, then, was the situation at the outbreak of the present war. The late development of national consciousness in Albania, and the sense of frustration common in a tiny country, eased the Italian position. There were spasmodic rebellions, but they were by tribes, not by the nation, and were easily suppressed.

Not until the Italian attack on Greece in 1940 did the Albanians get a chance to show their quality as guerrillas. Mussolini hoped



for their aid—was not Greece Albania's hereditary enemy? Did not Albanians live inside the Greek frontier, burning to be "rescued"? Yet at an early stage the Albanian troops had to be withdrawn from the campaign as "unreliable." They did not like the Greeks—but they liked the Italians still less. Some of the tribes went much further than this, and did not disguise their hate for Italy. If the Greek thrust had been continued, many Albanians would have joined it in a war of liberation.

The German intervention changed the course of the campaign in a night: Albania reverted to an Italian province, with bitter reprisals against the tribes which had "refused to co-operate" with the Italians: they included most of the Orthodox Christians of the southern border districts. On the collapse of Italy in 1943, Hitler was good enough to declare that Albania was now an independent country again—but German officials took over the Italian control, and German troops garrisoned the land. They may be more successful than the Italians, for there is no legacy of hate between Albanians and Germans—there has been no previous point of contact. Yet to date the all-powerful Germans have done nothing to solve the problems of their latest protégés. Perhaps they recognize that their occupation is only temporary. Certainly by the summer of 1943 considerable bodies of Albanian guerrillas were fighting under British direction and by the side of Greek and Yugoslav patriot forces. They will deserve the re-establishment of Albanian independence, which Britain has already promised.

#### IV

The Italian occupation of Albania was probably prompted by strategic reasons—it gave to Italy complete control of the Adriatic, and a foothold very useful for further interference in Balkan affairs. Yet, for its size, Albania has considerable economic resources, as yet but little developed.

Agriculturally, the land is poor, and can scarcely support its present population. Work has begun on the draining of the marshes of the coastal plain: this would not merely provide a con-

siderable area of fertile ground, but reduce the malarial risk. It is planned to produce olives, cheese, and wine in the reclaimed land. The local mulberry trees are to be further used for the cultivation of silkworms.

The mineral wealth of Albania has even now only been partially exploited, and is potentially high. Copper is already being mined near Scutari, and other large deposits have been discovered. Small quantities of chrome, iron, asphalt, and bitumen are also mined.

At Devoli, in the southern area, is a considerable oil-field, which already produces more than 250,000 tons a year. It is known that other districts have oil-bearing strata, and the total yield may reach important proportions, especially valuable because of its geographical position, so near to Italy and other industrial centres.

A few other facts and figures may be of use. The area of Albania is 28,000 square kilometres (about 10,900 square miles)—the size of New Jersey and Delaware combined. Its population in 1937 was 1,120,000—a density of no more than 40 to the square kilometre—easily understood in view of the mountainous character of the area. Only 3,000 square kilometres are under cultivation! The farm population per square kilometre (267) is the highest in the Balkans and one of the highest in Europe: the average figure for the whole continent is 77.

It was natural that more than one-half of Albania's trade was with her "protector," Italy. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that Albania was still an economic liability—her imports far exceeded her exports in value: this is inevitable in a developing state. Italian loans to Albania totalled more than \$50,000,000—a tremendous sum to a small and poor country, where the annual state revenue is only \$5,000,000. Remittances from Albanian emigrants abroad helped to balance the national budget, but this could never have been accomplished without Italian assistance.

In recent German and Italian policy in the Balkans we have something worthy of careful study. In older days Great Powers intrigued openly in smaller states, seldom restricting the use or

threat of force. The modern method is to obtain a position of economic domination whereby the small state is reduced to satellite rank, dependent upon the well-being of its economic "benefactor." This is a pernicious system; and its replacement becomes one of our most urgent problems.

## V

As Albania was last of the Balkan states to emerge from the ruins of the Turkish Empire, and other people had first choice, it is not surprising to find that its frontiers are compressed. Conse-



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quently, about 600,000 Albanians live outside—and as the population of the parent state is only a million, the proportion of exiles is large.

Nearly 100,000 Albanians are to be found in North-western Greece. They are hopelessly intermixed with Greeks—and there

are about 45,000 Greeks to the north of the boundary. This problem will be considered in the Greek chapter.

More serious is the case of the Albanians in Yugoslavia, for here is a direct clash between ethnic and historic interests. Down to the south of Yugoslavia, verging on Macedonia, we have already encountered a district which is almost sacred to the Serbian race: the plain of Kossovo, the Field of the Blackbirds.

The dread field of Kossovo was introduced into every Serbian legend and folk-song: naturally, it was a plain of blood and terror, of gloom and despair. Peasants fled from its unhappy memories, and others were exterminated by roving, uncontrolled bands of Turkish irregulars. For three hundred years the district was almost deserted, peopled only by families of wandering herdsmen. Then the Turks settled Kossovo with Albanians; they, being Moslems, were not subject to the "evangelizing" drives which had helped to depopulate the plain. Thus a new problem was born.

When Serbia obtained this area from Turkey in 1913, therefore, she found that its population was largely Albanian. Since then large numbers of Serbian families have been settled there, but the district is still predominantly Albanian, with the mosque a more familiar feature than the church.

Nor did the local Albanians willingly accept Yugoslav sovereignty. They are masters of the art of guerrilla warfare, and are careless of death. For years they kept up a desultory campaign, with the whole Kossovo area under military control. They were supported by their kinsmen inside Albania proper. The situation was often anxious or critical, and only Italian influence restrained the Yugoslavs from a peremptory solution of the difficulty. By 1935, however, the Kossovo region was "pacified." I travelled the district without incident—but I felt no assurance that the troubles would not begin afresh at any moment.

The difficulty is that the mountain valleys of Albania cannot support a larger population than at present: thus, it is not possible to withdraw the Kossovo Albanians into their own country. It seems that the borders ought reasonably to be extended—but at present the Albanian settlers live in a region sacred to every Yugo-

slav, and which could never be given up. No serious attempt was made to decide the difficulty: Albania was small and powerless, and Italy only wished to make trouble in her own time.

Nor did the German conquest of Yugoslavia bring a solution. Yugoslav Macedonia was allocated to Bulgaria, whose new and temporary frontiers now include tens of thousands of Albanians, so generously were the boundaries drawn. The Albanian frontiers, however, were enlarged by two small strips only—a small area in the north-east, about Djakovica, and a strip from Debar to Struga, on the north shore of Lake Okrid. Both these districts have predominantly Albanian populations, but the main Albanian population of Kossovo still lives in the rump of Serbia, under the rule of the Belgrade government controlled by the Germans.

## VI

History is likely to judge our peace treaties in the light of their attitude to small countries; and Albania is the smallest of all. There is one school of thought which argues: Albanian national consciousness is not yet fully developed—the people are still in the tribal state. Therefore there is no reason why they should not be happy under beneficent foreign rule. There are two main tribal divisions: the Ghegs to the north of the little river Skumbri, and the Tosks to the south. There is a great difference between the character of the two divisions. The kilted Tosks are feudal, the trousered Ghegs are still tribal. Let the Ghegs place themselves under the protection of the Yugoslavs, the Tosks under that of the Greeks. The Albanians are the descendants of one of the oldest of the Balkan races; they are like the Basques in Western Europe—and the Basques have been divided for centuries in France and Spain.

The objections to this argument are: (*a*) the Albanians have at least begun to acquire national consciousness, and the process has probably gone too far to be halted; (*b*) the proposal suggests that the Albanians should place themselves under the protection of people they class as their hereditary enemies—a term which

means much more in the Balkans than in Western Europe; (c) for that matter, there is a strong racial campaign for autonomy among the Basques.

Obviously the first objective is to discover the wishes of the Albanian people. Despite their tribal outlook, I do not believe that they wish to be dominated by anybody, however "beneficent" their prospective protector may be.

If a Balkan Federation should eventually mature, Albania would be its very junior member. The others might take a legitimate pride in assisting its growth. Frontier questions would be modest in comparison with others—even minor rectifications would restore a large number of Albanians to their homeland.

And when some of our Balkan friends talk of the division of Albania either territorially or into "spheres of influence," it is as well to remind them that the United Nations have already promised Albania the re-establishment of its independence after victory. This is surely the minimum of our obligations. Yet it is not enough merely to proclaim a free Albania: we must help to develop that freedom.

Since his escape in 1939, Zog has been living privately in England. I do not know if he will return to Albania—that probably depends on the wishes of his people. But Albania will certainly need someone like him in the difficult post-war years.

The small countries have made contributions to civilization out of all proportion to their size. Albania has been considered a backward and primitive land—though it supplied a surprising number of Turkish leaders. I refuse to credit that the hardy endurance and fearless courage of this potentially fine people cannot be diverted from their ancient feuds of honour into channels of service.

## 6

### GREECE

#### I

WHENEVER THERE IS DISTRESS in the Balkans, Greece gets more than her fair share. In the neighbouring states, the principal crops are wheat and corn; in Greece, tobacco. In an emergency, a man can live on wheat and corn alone, but he cannot live on smoke.

Thus the world economic depression had appalling effects in Greece; and when the Germans invaded the Balkans, while Serbian peasants were able to exist on their own produce, the Greeks starved. Greece, an agricultural country, actually *imports* cereals even in peace.

The country comprises 50,200 square miles—about the size of New York State. Few of its population of seven millions live more than fifty miles from the sea. The heart of Greece, indeed, lies in her islands and her innumerable bays rather than in the isolated mountain valleys, which in older days promoted the growth of a series of little states with fierce local patriotism.

There is no monotony in the Grecian landscape. Just as it is impossible to be far from the sea, so no Greek can escape the sight of mountains. The narrow valleys are sometimes fertile: their crops are Mediterranean rather than Balkan—tobacco, oranges, olives, dates, almonds, vines, and the like. Greek grapes are familiar to us—as currants. The name comes from Corinth: the French called the small dried grapes *raisins de Corinthe*, and the word became Anglicized.

The towns are European, the people modern, their manners French. The rural areas still bear traces of antique survivals, overlaid with a touch of orientalism, a Turkish legacy. In the fertile

valleys the houses are solid two-storied structures; the mountain peasant lives in a stone hut which houses his animals as well as his family. The many and wonderful remains of antiquity emphasize the contrast of noble dwellings and miserable habitations.

The Greeks believe that their race and culture are higher than the Balkan peoples'. Although they have absorbed large numbers of other races, especially Albanians and Vlachs, they remain a remarkably homogeneous race. Even in Turkish days, their zeal and energy singled them out and gave them an advantageous position—and an early release from bondage. Today, their business acumen is said to exceed even that of the Balkan Jew. They have a zeal for education, as yet only partially satisfied. They are intensely patriotic and are the keenest politicians of the Balkans—which is saying a very great deal.

It is a great tribute to Greek energy and initiative that their material standard of life is the highest in the Balkans: the annual average income per head of the population is \$140—certainly not high, but comparing favourably with the \$75 of neighbouring Bulgaria, and the \$80 of richer Roumania. Calculated in comparative terms of purchasing power, the average income per occupied person is \$380—a high figure for the Balkans. It is remarkable because Greece is the least fertile of all the Balkan lands, except Albania: 55 per cent of all its area is waste land; only 18.5 per cent is cultivable, 26.5 per cent being pasture or forest. Yet on this basis Greece maintains a population of 184 to the square kilometre of cultivated land—nearly twice the Balkan average.

The explanation is that, unlike its neighbours, Greece has important alternatives to agriculture. Of the occupied population 61 per cent is engaged in agriculture; but it receives only 45 per cent of the national income. Most important of industries is shipping: the Greek merchant fleet in 1938 totalled 1,889,000 gross registered tons—one-twentieth of all the shipping in the world, a remarkable achievement for so small a country. Add to this the Greek aptitude for commerce, and the higher standard of living is explained. In recent years both agricultural and industrial products have increased in quantity, and mining has been ex-



tended, but Greece is still dependent on her exports like tobacco and grapes to pay for her imports of essential foods. Because of her maritime position, Greece never became dominated economically by Germany as were her neighbours—Germany was easily her most important customer, but controlled less than 30 per cent of Greek trade. Her exports to Germany actually dwindled during the period of that country's pressure—from 38.7 per cent in 1936 to 27.5 per cent in 1939. British figures remained almost stationary, but the proportion of Greek exports lost to Germany went to the United States. Nevertheless, the Reich continued to take nearly one-half of the Greek tobacco crop.

Greek agriculture needs urgent attention. Too large a proportion of the national income goes to the merchants in the towns. If the Greeks average standard of living is highest in the Balkans, that of the peasant is as low as any other. He has been slow to awaken, but has now reached the stage when he will demand his rights.

## II

The spirit of ancient Greece dies hard. The Greeks of today differ very considerably from their proud forebears in blood and speech, but some of the old ideals still dominate Greek minds.

In turning from the Balkans proper to Greece—really not a Balkan state at all, but part of the great Mediterranean civilization—we find ourselves spiritually on friendly ground. Instead of struggling with the outlandish names of battles, rulers, and lawgivers that decided the fate of some unfamiliar land—Kosovo, George Kastrioti, Lek—we recognize those that helped to form the destinies of all civilization—Marathon, Pericles, Solon. To this tiny land we owe the greater part of our own culture, our arts and sciences, the form our religion has taken, our tradition of sport—and the ideals for which we are fighting today.

The Greeks were among the "fair white" races which invaded Europe some three thousand years ago. In the tip of the Balkan peninsula and its adjacent islands they found a civilization—part

of the great "heliolithic" culture which encircled the earth—conquered it, assimilated the "dark white" people who had made it, and carried it to unsurpassed heights. Scattered geographically in mountain valleys and islands, they never united but formed a number of independent city-states—only too often at war.

Each state was free to develop its own method of government, and among them two foreshadowed respectively the political ideals which are struggling for supremacy today. Sparta was the forerunner of the totalitarian dictatorship, with all its advantages and faults. In the military virtues, in courage, in a fierce patriotism which made any self-sacrifice for the interests of the state, it was unsurpassed. Mingled with these, however, were a fanatical discipline of man, woman, and child; a ruthless tyranny over its "subject people," the Helots; and a vicious contempt for all other cultures—indeed for culture itself.

Its great opponent was the forerunner of all democracies, in which the first steps were taken towards the political ideals to which we ourselves hold. A maritime state depending, like modern Greece—and modern Britain—on its overseas trade, Athens had the typical failings and the typical strength of democracy, of a government dependent on the vote of its citizens. Fickle towards even its finest leaders, given to attacks of "heresy hunting," unreliable in foreign relations, nevertheless its love of freedom, its civic sense, its stalwart patriotism, its achievements in culture, could not be denied. Its armies could fight on land as bravely as those of Sparta, and its navies could fight on the seas. No less devoted were its people to the arts of peace: they adorned their city with a magnificent architecture and an unsurpassed sculpture, they produced a mighty literature, they made notable achievements in every branch of science.

In the face of invasion from the armies of Persia, the city-states of Greece forgot their differences and rallied to the defence of "All Hellas." The Spartan rear-guard died to the last man in a delaying action at Thermopylae; the Athenian-led fleets hurled the enemy navies back in confusion and defeat at Salamis. Inspired by these victories, the Greeks carried their civilization to even

greater heights of achievement, celebrating it both in stone and in words. Even after the cities had relapsed into a squalid war, and the hopelessly divided Hellenes had been subjugated first by Macedonia and then by Rome, still the art and thought of Athens continued to dominate the world, not only from the great Museum at Alexandria but in countless libraries and schools and quiet studies scattered throughout the Empire.

It may have been the higher civilization of the Greeks which mitigated the harshness of the Roman Empire, not merely improving its culture but making life more tolerable for the poor and the slaves. Certainly the Greek-speaking part of the Empire survived the attacks of the barbarians longer than did the Latin-speaking West. Constantine the Great established his capital not at Rome but at Byzantium, renaming it Constantinople—we know it today as Istanbul. When the western part of the old Roman Empire had been broken by the barbarian raiders, the Byzantine Empire thus founded survived and advanced under the rule of Theodosius, Justinian (with his Empress Theodora), and Heraclius.

This Empire was one of extraordinary formalism; its architecture and art are impressive, but they too have a stereotyped quality; its chief intellectual interest was neither art nor science but— theology. In the eleventh century the last link between East and West was snapped by the severance of the Greek Orthodox Church from the Roman Catholic. The rupture took place over a subtle theological dispute, but the more obvious difference between the two churches is the refusal of the Greek Church to use images; instead they use icons, painted or of mosaic work—and these, though often of great beauty, show the typical Byzantine formalism. Ruling the Balkans as it did, and exercising a nominal sovereignty even over the barbarian conquerors of Roumania and Bulgaria, this Empire has left a permanent mark on the whole region: still greater is the influence of the Orthodox Church.

The onslaught of the Turks robbed the Byzantine Empire of its Asiatic possessions. The Crusaders sent by the Western Powers not merely failed to help it materially—they even conquered it themselves, raiding Constantinople and for a time placing it under

a "Latin" emperor and reuniting the two churches. This was only a temporary union, and Church and State alike were soon free. In the thirteenth century the Byzantine Empire finally fell before the Turks: Constantinople itself held out for a time, but was stormed in 1453. The Church remained, however, to form a bond of union between the Balkan peoples.

Through all the centuries the Greek language and culture never died. The clergy were freely used by the Turks as law administrators to subject peoples: they used their position—Greeks were in no position to fight, but they could think. No foreign rule ever succeeded in killing the Greek spirit: alien settlers were readily absorbed—except the Turks: here the difficulty of religion was almost insurmountable.

Thus, when at the opening of the nineteenth century signs of the oppressors' decadence were obvious, there was no need of a campaign to arouse Greek national consciousness—it was already alive. Indeed, in the mountain areas the Turkish rule had never been more than nominal: in some districts of Crete the Greeks had never submitted throughout the four centuries of alien domination.

Yet the first move, as usual in Balkan affairs, was prompted from without. Russia, her eyes fixed on her old ambition, Constantinople, urged the Greeks to revolt: then she would have a good excuse for intervening to protect her co-religionists. Tsarist Russia was not the only power to employ such expedients!

The fight for freedom was hard. The Greeks were organized only in peasant bands, and there was little cohesion in their efforts. They were joined by foreign volunteers, impelled as by a romantic crusade: Byron was a notable example. The Greeks recovered the traditional gallantry of their forefathers: the Turks had to call in the disciplined Egyptian army to subdue them. Then Britain, France, and Russia intervened: by 1829 Greece was free—only the southern half of the land, it is true. But in 1862, when a new king was chosen—he was of Danish-German stock, a brother of Queen Alexandra—Britain added the Ionian Islands as a coronation present.

The circumstances were of unusual interest. King Otto, the German King of Greece, had abdicated, and the Greeks had to choose a new monarch. Prince Alfred, second son of Queen Victoria, received 230,016 votes; the next candidate, the Duke of Leuchtenberg, got 2,400, and Prince William George of Denmark, 6.

Prince Alfred was not able to accept the invitation—there was a very sensible rule formulated by the Great Powers that no member of a reigning house should accept a Balkan throne. The Greeks, in their disappointment, suggested Lord Stanley as a candidate for the position; at one time even Gladstone was mentioned! Eventually Prince William George, at British suggestion, was given the throne.

Students of history who enjoy the pleasurable game of "If" will find a good basis there—to rewrite history if Gladstone had become King of Greece!

Thereafter Greek history followed the Balkan pattern: continuous wars with Turkey, regaining some of the national territory, but occasioning great distress among the peasants. In 1912 the Turks tried to bribe Greece out of the Balkan pact with the offer of Crete. This island, with its overwhelmingly Greek population, was still nominally autonomous, under the suzerainty of the Turkish Sultan. For practical purposes, however, Crete was already part of the Greek territory, so that in any case the Turkish offer did not amount to much. Venizelos, the Greek leader, refused: we have seen that the subsequent war extended Greek frontiers in the north and added Crete and the Aegean Islands—except the Dodecanese.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Greek opinion was torn asunder. Constantine, the King, was pro-German: Venizelos, his Prime Minister, was pro-Ally. The resultant confusion can be imagined. It was redoubled by outside influences. The Allies wished to attack the Dardanelles, so as to have a supply route to Russia, badly in need of munitions. The assistance of Greek troops would have decided the campaign, and Venizelos was very ready to help. But the Russian government refused to agree: it did not wish to see the Greeks in Constantinople!

In 1915 an Allied army landed at Salonika. For a time there were rival governments in Greece, led by Constantine and Venizelos. Then Constantine abdicated, and Greece formally entered the war on the Allied side and shared in the spoils of victory.

By the Treaty of Neuilly she regained the Eastern Thrace seaboard—already considered in the Bulgarian chapter. By the Treaty of Sèvres she received minor territorial gains from Turkey in Europe, and the port of Smyrna and its hinterland in Asia Minor.

Then followed drama. King Alexander, Constantine's son and successor, had ruled wisely, with Allied backing. In 1920 he was bitten by a pet monkey, and died. A plebiscite was held, and Constantine was invited to return. The ex-Allies refused to recognize him. France and Italy, in particular, were incensed and withdrew their support from Greece. Indeed, when a year later Turkey and Greece were at war, they supported the Turks!

We have noted how the Greeks were defeated and their population in Asia Minor was bundled ruthlessly back to the homeland. The distress in Greece was terrible: there were months of starvation; revolution, bloodily repressed. Constantine abdicated again: financial chaos—at one time the government adopted the heroic measure of cutting all banknotes in half and reducing their value accordingly. And all as the result of a monkey's bite!

The new King, George, had little chance to cope with these appalling conditions. Civil war developed: a republic was proclaimed: the King fled to England. After months of confusion General Pangalos became dictator of Greece: he played the part fully—he even dictated the length of women's skirts!

Democratic ideas can be submerged, but seldom destroyed. Slowly Greek confidence returned: by 1928 the country had again a parliamentary government.. The pace of progress heightened; Venizelos again became Prime Minister, but his reforming zeal was dead. Gradually the republican democracy drifted towards totalitarian ideas, which always offer an illusionary ease in moments of crisis.

Venizelos fell in 1933. Complete confusion reigned. Two years later the leader of the day, General Kondylis, determined on a

drastic measure. With martial law prevailing, he held a plebiscite, which decided on the return of the King from his exile. Venizelos, in his native Crete, staged a revolt, but it failed.

(The plebiscite was so decisive that some Greeks believed that it must have been "arranged." In 1923, 758,742 people voted in favour of a republic, as against 325,322 for the monarchy. Ten years later, 1,491,992 voted for the monarchy and only 32,454 against! Yet the political confusion and economic distress in Greece might easily have caused a large number of people to change their minds.)

King George II appointed General Metaxas as his Prime Minister. Rapidly the general became virtual dictator—against the King's will, but backed by the army. Parliamentary parties were abolished, rigid discipline was enforced, efficiency was preferred to liberty. The worst features of the Nazi and Fascist régimes were missing, but Greece was virtually a totalitarian state. The progressive parties, however, were never completely suppressed.

In foreign affairs Greece was hopelessly torn. Metaxas had received his military training in Germany, and had a healthy and proper respect for the German war machine. On the other hand, Greece alone among the Balkan countries appreciates the force of sea power, and in spite of its undemocratic form Greece leaned to Britain rather than to Germany. Nearer home, Greece firmly supported the Balkan Pact, and her friendship with Turkey was now strongly established. Indeed, in external affairs her situation was firmer than that of any other Balkan state. But internally Greece was divided—for a dictatorship presents only a deceptive façade of unity. It was an unhappy Greece which faced uneasily the trials which were bound to come her way when Germany plunged Europe into war.

### III

The Greeks might fear Germany, and Greek officers might hold the German army in high admiration, but there were no second opinions about Italy.

Relations had long been strained: not merely because of Italian occupation of the Dodecanese Islands—to be considered in the next section—but because many Greeks believed that Mussolini's ambitions included Greece. His occupation of Albania aroused the liveliest apprehension. Nevertheless, the Metaxas government did its utmost to keep Greece out of the war, despite many Italian provocations. Eventually on October 28, 1940, the Italians made a direct aggressive assault.

No other event could have so united the Greeks: a German onslaught might have divided them—would certainly have divided their leaders. The Italian advance was checked, and the invaders were flung back into Albania. Greek courage aroused the admiration of the world: we all like to see the small boy stand up successfully to the bully. The Italians fought unwillingly and with a bad conscience; the Greeks, in defence of their native land. Their superior morale, coupled with the difficult mountain country, neutralized the gap between the modern Italian equipment and the somewhat primitive military outfit of the Greeks.

By April, 1941, Hitler had to come to the rescue of his partner: the Balkan flank must be secured before he launched his attack on Russia. The rapid defeat of Yugoslavia rendered the Greek situation impossible. The Greeks resisted gallantly on the Bulgarian frontier, but German panzer divisions poured through the Monastir Gap, in Southern Yugoslavia, and cut the communications of the Greek army in Albania. British, Australian, and New Zealand troops made a stubborn resistance at Olympus and Thermopylae, followed by a fighting retreat to the south, gaining invaluable time. The bulk of the army was evacuated, with some Greek troops, to Crete, but all its heavy equipment was lost: a fortnight later Crete itself fell to the Germans after an air attack which was then unique.

Crete is one of the most remarkable sections of the Greek territory. This island had, indeed, been civilized long before the Hellenes arrived in Europe; it was one of the centres of the age-old "dark white" Mediterranean culture. As early as 4000 B.C. it was trading with Egypt, and its capital, Cnossos, was not so much a



city as a palace for the Cretan Minos (monarch) and his court. The writing of this early people has not yet been deciphered; their art-work, not only in sculpture and painting but in pottery, textiles and jewellery, was of high excellence. Their architecture was not only striking; its sanitation was extraordinarily "modern." The Cretans enjoyed athletic displays, among which were complicated forms of bull-fighting with definite resemblances to that of modern Spain.

About 1400 B.C. this civilization met with sudden disaster, the nature of which remains obscure. There are evidences of an earthquake, but with them are evidences, too, of a destructive enemy occupation. The legend of Theseus may indicate a successful attack by the Greeks on a city which had demanded a tribute of men and maidens but had become too weak to enforce it. Thereafter the island ceased to be a centre of history; it became a mere appanage to the neighbouring states, and shared in the fortunes—and the fate—of Greece.

Tradition places a successful, if ill-fated, attempt at flight on Crete, that of Daedalus and his over-venturesome son Icarus. There was, therefore, an ironical appropriateness in the Nazi conquest of the island by the use, on an unprecedented scale, of parachute troops. In spite of an heroic resistance by the Greeks and their British allies, Crete was conquered after a stubborn resistance. Possibly the Germans hoped to use it in a "pincer movement" to advance by way of Cyprus and Palestine on either Russia or Egypt; but if so they were disappointed.

The Greeks had faced the Germans gallantly, but their leaders were shaken even by the threat of German attack. General Metaxas had died in the early days of the Italian invasion: his successor, M. Korizis, continued his policy. All this time the German Legation was established at Athens! The fact that Greek leaders still kept on terms with the senior partner of their enemy was probably not due to treachery, but to fear. It is a favourite and powerful German weapon.

As the Germans swept from the north and the overwhelmed Greek armies disintegrated, M. Korizis committed suicide: at

least, this was the story given out at the time: later versions may be more interesting. In a desperate effort to ride the confusion, the King himself became Prime Minister for a few days: then he passed on the office to M. Tsouderos, an old follower of Venizelos, a fighter, and a friend of Britain. His first measures were concellations of totalitarian measures, but he had no chance: Greece was already beaten to her knees.

The generals who had fought with determination against the Italians wobbled when faced with the German onslaught. They knew that they stood no chance whatsoever. It was one of them, Tsalakoglou, who seized power when the legitimate government left Athens. He is commonly called a quisling, and he may be—he has certainly co-operated closely with the Germans. Yet probably his first idea was akin to that of Neditch in Serbia: knowing that resistance was hopeless, he wished to make early terms with the Germans: and, when Greece was beaten, he tried to save what he could from the wreck.

He was not very successful. The Germans plundered the country without scruple, then left the policing of Greece largely to their allies. The Bulgars took over Thrace and Greek Macedonia—and many years must elapse before their brutalities there are forgotten. The Italians occupied the main peninsula, and their hand was seldom light.

Yet starvation was the most dreadful scourge. We have already noted the peculiar economic composition of Greece. Now, with large quantities of food commandeered by the invaders, famine swept the stricken land. In Athens alone four hundred people died every day in the winter of 1941; the total casualties run into hundreds of thousands.

Famine is a potent weapon. It can drive brave men to surrender and to co-operate with their conquerors: or it can arouse a dangerous spirit of despair. In Greece it did both.

Patriotic movements emerge by impulse, seldom by concerted organization. In a mountainous country like Greece, physically divided, it is scarcely surprising that underground warfare tended to be local. Some Greek units—with British additions—never sub-

mitted, but took to the mountains to bide their time. Thousands of other men, at first stunned by the rapid and staggering German advance, recovered their nerve and joined in the fight. It was understandable that the natural urge to resistance was at first localized, but it was tragic that in later stages those who fought in a common cause did not unite their forces.

As I write this section there are three Greek patriot forces in the field. The Communists, who had been "suppressed" by the Metaxas régime, took up the fight soon after the German attack on Russia. Their organization, the E.A.M., might be translated as the National Liberation Front. Although its inspiration is largely Communist, its ranks are very mixed, as in Yugoslavia: indeed, its military commander, Colonel Sarafis, is not a Communist. This organization is the most important and active of the three.

The E.D.E.S., or National Democratic Greek Army, is a military organization, its leader Colonel Zervas. It is largely composed of regular soldiers; politically it leans to the Conservative side, though there are many Republicans in its ranks. The third organization, the E.E.K.A., under Colonel Psaros, is also military in its basis.

All three organizations have fought gallantly against German and Italian occupiers. It was sheer tragedy that they chose the moment of the Italian collapse to quarrel among themselves. They had never accepted direction from the Greek government exiled, at first, in London and later in Cairo. Their only liaison was by means of British and American officers, for all of them accepted the direction of the Middle East Command, and staff officers were attached to each headquarters. It is a sad commentary on national division when British and American officers have to form the link between Greek organizations which should have only one aim! Yet the Greeks are not alone when they allow political considerations to overshadow questions of urgent principle.

In October, 1943, General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson addressed a stern reproof to the dissident factions and called for unity at a critical moment, pointing out very correctly that divi-

sion was Hitler's best weapon. His rebuke was not addressed to one particular organization, but to all. Some sections of the British press have complained that the policy has been to support only right-wing patriotic elements in Greece and Yugoslavia. This is not correct: we have co-operated with both sides, trying to allay their quarrels and to direct their efforts systematically against the common enemy.

The situation in Greece had been aggravated by events in Cairo. The guerrilla bodies had sent deputations, demanding to be represented in the Greek government. Their request was refused: the government was political, not military, it was argued: the guerrillas were already represented by members of their own political parties. The government did not wish to run the risk of developing into another military dictatorship. It did, however, give a pledge of resignation immediately Greece was freed, so that a new government could be elected under democratic conditions.

The position of the King also raised difficulties. He, too, had given a pledge—that within six months of the liberation of Greece a plebiscite should be held, to decide whether the country should remain a monarchy or become a republic once again. Some of the guerrillas objected: the Communists especially. The plebiscite might be like the last, they declared—held under the protection of the army, with an inevitable result. They asked that King George should remain outside Greece until after the plebiscite had been held. Their suggestion was not warmly welcomed: the King is naturally anxious to be in the forefront of Greek liberation. What kind of king would he be if he held back while others did all the work?

The situation consequent upon such dissension can be imagined. Early in 1944 British and American liaison officers got together the leaders of the E.A.M. and the E.D.E.S., and persuaded them to an agreement—that they would no longer fight each other, but only the Germans. Territorial agreements were added so as to avoid clashes. This agreement lasted for several weeks, but the internecine strife began again. Its effects were serious, for

they spread to the Greek navy and army in Egypt. There, E.A.M. elements provoked open mutinies, which had to be forcibly suppressed. The tragedy of Greece was at its height.

Mr. Churchill, in his speech of May 24, 1944, referred to the "appalling situation in Greece. The excesses of the E.L.A.S., which is the military body operating under the E.A.M., had so alienated the population that in many parts the Germans had been able to form security battalions of Greeks to fight the E.A.M. These security battalions were made up of men in many cases who would far rather have been out in the hills maintaining the guerrilla warfare. They were being completely alienated.

"At the same time, the state of hostility and suspicion which led last autumn to an actual civil war between the E.A.M. and the other resistance organisations, especially the E.D.E.S., under Colonel Zervas, a leader who commands the undivided support of the civilian population in his area, and who has always shown the strictest compliance with the orders sent him from G.H.Q., Middle East, under whom all his forces have been placed. Thus it seemed to be a question of all against all, and no one but the Germans rejoicing."

Fortunately, Mr. Churchill was able to report a hopeful turn in Greek affairs. Successive prime ministers had failed to secure unity, but now M. Papandreou was asked to form a government. Before doing so, he called a conference in the Lebanon, well away from the scene of strife. Every Greek party, including the Communist, was represented. M. Papandreou secured a triumph—the conference reached a unanimous decision: a united Greek government should be formed, to devote itself to the freeing of Greece. Mr. Churchill hoped that the "marked and beneficial change" in the Greek situation would be maintained, a sentiment we can heartily endorse.

The difficulties can be eased by patience, common sense, and time. The Germans are working hard, directly and through their puppets, to heighten the Greek disunity. The friends of Greece must work equally hard to counter their schemes.

## IV

The territorial problems affecting Greece are of minor importance compared with those of the other Balkan countries. Two of them are purely questions of defence.

The first will probably never be raised, for it affects a friendly power. The invasion route via the Monastir Gap, in Southern Yugoslavia, has been a constant menace to Greece throughout history: it was used by the Germans in 1941 and contributed largely to the discomfiture of the Greek armies. To the Yugoslavs, the pass is an unimportant feature of the southern extremity of their country: to the Greeks it is a vital defensive bastion, and they would like to garrison it themselves. However, with the promise of even closer co-operation between Yugoslavia and Greece, no argument on this problem is likely to arise.

It may be that we shall have to face insistent demands for a strategic Greek frontier with Bulgaria. A glance at the map shows how indefensible is the long narrow strip of Thrace, in north-eastern Greece. With the Bulgars holding the high passes, the district is constantly menaced. Even if a Greek government is more moderate, the local people will certainly demand a protective frontier.

In Yugoslavia and Greece feeling against Bulgaria is very bitter. Are not the Bulgars to be punished for their wickedness? it will be asked. They have not merely occupied their neighbours' territory, after contributing directly to a German victory, but they have often behaved with great brutality. This must never happen again.

The mountain regions are sparsely populated and of no great economic importance. Further, most of the people are Pomaks, Moslem Bulgars, almost a tribe apart from the main race despite their purer ethnic origin. Why should not the frontiers be pushed a few miles to the north, so that the Greeks can control the passes? Is it a crime to ask for protective frontiers? Russia demands them; the United States buys strategic bases in the Atlantic and will

certainly seize Japanese islands in the Pacific. Is not Greece equally entitled to security?

So will run the Greek argument. Against it must be set the fact that Bulgaria by itself is no menace to Greece; and, if it is backed by a Great Power, then all the passes in the Balkans will not suffice as a defence. The first protection to Greece is a firm system of collective security in the Balkans; this must include Bulgaria to be effective.

## V

We have already noted the third territorial problem affecting Greece—Northern Epirus, or the southern fringe of Albania. Certainly we have not heard the last of this.

The region was occupied by the Greeks during the Balkan Wars in 1912. The subsequent Boundary Commission favoured Greek claims, but Italy and Austria objected. At that time they were allies—but both had ideas of using Albania as a stepping-stone into the Balkans—ideas which Mussolini later attempted to exploit.

As at the same period there was some dispute about the Aegean Islands, far more important than Northern Epirus, Greece resigned her formal claim. The people revolted; for a few months they set up a local autonomous government. Then their troubles were swallowed in the war of 1914—to be revived in 1919. Again, however, Northern Epirus was allocated to Albania, under Italian influence. Since then there have been many uneasy moments.

(By a strange coincidence, the line reached by the Greek army in 1941 followed almost exactly the boundary of Northern Epirus.)

Ethnically the Greek claim could not be sustained: in a population of 210,000 only 45,000 are Greeks. Yet again, a man's religion is sometimes of greater force than his race, especially when his political outlook is very parochial. In Northern Epirus there are 120,000 Orthodox Christians to 90,000 Moslems, and some of

the Orthodox Albanians are even more fervently pro-Greek than the Greeks themselves.

At the same time, however, there are over 100,000 people of Albanian stock in Greece proper: most of them are of the Orthodox faith. Greeks and Albanians, two of the oldest peoples of the Balkans, have always been closely associated: indeed, it is not improper to say that the Albanians have been the Scots of Greece. Throughout history they have supplied many of the leaders for their neighbours: the habit has persisted to our own time. When Venizelos set up his Greek triumvirate at Salonika in 1915, two of its members were Albanians! In its short courses as a republic, Greece had only three presidents—Coundouriotis, Zaimis, and Pangalos. All three were of Albanian stock! Albanians are to be found freely in the Greek navy and merchant service. They are successful businessmen: indeed, they seem to have been more successful in Greece and Turkey than in their own country: they have supplied a useful stubbornness and hard-headedness to counter Mediterranean volatility. In Greece a stubborn man is called "an Albanian head."

Obviously a plebiscite is called for: to be fair, it should be held in Greek Epirus as well as the northern territory. The Greek voting would be solid: the Albanian would probably be mixed, for the clash of race and religion is very serious. In the upshot, a minor modification of the frontier and an exchange of populations would probably solve the problem. I have already suggested that the other Balkan states—especially Greece and Yugoslavia—should take a friendly interest in the development of Albania. This little land is the essence of the Balkans, and should never again be used as a foothold by an ambitious and predatory state.

## VI

The Greeks look upon the possession of the Dodecanese Islands not as an acquisition, but as a restitution.

The Dodecanese—the name means the Twelve Islands, but today thirteen are included—lie off the Turkish coast of Asia



Minor, but have always been populated by Greeks. Even in the centuries when they were part of the Turkish Empire, local government always prevailed, the Turks being content with a lump payment by way of taxes. In 1912 the Italians occupied the islands: at war with Turkey, they needed a success to counter-balance their failures in Libya, and their overwhelming sea power made an easy victory possible. Nevertheless, the Italians solemnly declared that the occupation was only temporary: indeed, they were aided in their occupation by the Greek islanders, who were promised that their moment of deliverance was at hand. This was confirmed by the first Treaty of Lausanne in 1912, which pledged Italy to evacuate the islands as soon as Turkey had evacuated Libya.

But the Italians stayed on. It was especially galling for the Greeks, who could easily have captured the Dodecanese during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 had they still been occupied by the Turks!

In 1915 Britain and France wished to detach Italy from her alliance with Germany and Austria and to persuade her to enter the war on their side. Italy's price was high: she demanded not merely Austrian territory to which she had an ethnic right, but other areas to which she had no moral claim. Among them were the Dodecanese.

Nevertheless, in 1919 Italy agreed to restore to Greece twelve of the islands and to give to Rhodes a wide local autonomy. Rhodes itself was to be returned if Britain gave up Cyprus. But in 1922 the Italian government—led by Count Sforza!—repudiated this agreement. The Greeks had just suffered their disaster in Asia Minor and were weak: the Italians were strong. The story is not new.

Since that time the Italians have striven to make their hold firmer. All the inhabitants were compelled to adopt Italian nationality—although, with the exception of a few Turks and Jews, they were all Greeks. The Italians even attempted to detach the local church from the Greek Patriarchate. There are only 80,000 inhabitants in all: the islands have no economic value—there is a

small sponge-fishing industry—and the Italian claim is entirely on strategic grounds.

Here, at least, is a question with an easy answer. The Turks will be glad to see the Italians out of the Dodecanese, for Mussolini was only proclaiming older Italian ambitions when he talked about his "historic mission" in Asia Minor. The return of the Dodecanese Islands to the Greeks is indeed a simple case of rightful restitution.

## VII

The restoration of Greece is obviously one of the first duties of the United Nations. Her military contribution was invaluable: her firm stand against the Italians aroused some of the first doubts of Axis invincibility. Nor need the British campaign in Greece be dismissed as a wasted effort: on the contrary, it was vital. Greece was lost in spite of it, but six weeks of time was gained. In the summer of 1941 the prepared German attack on Russia surged forward, but was halted by Russia's traditional ally, "General Winter." Had the Germans had those extra six weeks of summer, as they had planned, our allies might indeed have been hard pressed.

In the New Europe, Greece will collaborate closely with her neighbours. Yet there is a wide desire for even closer links with the British Empire. If actual inclusion is not possible, then many Greeks would like an association on the Egyptian model.

We may receive requests of this kind from many sources after victory: many Poles hold the same idea, and it is not unknown in Western Europe. The possibility was envisaged at the Ottawa Conference years ago.

It is too early to speculate. Yet, although ethnically, culturally, and physically Greece stands somewhat apart from her neighbours, Balkan unity is incomplete without her. The potential contribution of Greece to the advancement of South-eastern Europe is very large.

The chapter devoted to Greece is a short one. This, of course,

has no relation to her comparative importance, but reflects the fact that her external problems are fortunately few and simple. If her people can advance in unity to victory, forgetting their factional interests, and can set their own house in order—and there is much to do—then Greece can march firmly beside her neighbours.

# 7

## TURKEY

### I

THE "SICK MAN of Europe" was not Turkey itself, but the Ottoman Empire over which it ruled. It died, but its heir, modern Turkey, has proved to be an extremely virile young man.

Turkey has always had an importance far beyond its size and population. This applies today. In the Balkans, Turkey occupies only 10,880 square miles with a population of two million; yet this area, crowded about Istanbul and the Dardanelles, is the cornerstone of the Balkan edifice.

The Turks first appear in history as part of the great horde of nomads who descended on the West in intermittent waves from the steppes of Asia. By civilized standards they were fierce and barbaric; and they had little difficulty in mastering the countries they attacked. Even when converted to Islam, they dominated the Arabs among whom the Moslem religion had appeared, and they had no hesitation in conquering their co-religionists. In the eleventh century they robbed the Byzantine Empire of its possessions in Asia Minor and were threatening Constantinople itself; and the attacks of the Crusaders did little to repel them.

The great westward sweep of the Mongols under Jenghis Khan and Ogdai Khan drove into Asia Minor another Turkish tribe, the Ottomans, who forced their way across the Dardanelles and conquered Macedonia, Serbia, and Bulgaria. They took Constantinople in 1453, and at the death of Suleiman the Magnificent in 1566 the whole of the Balkans was in the grip of the Ottoman Empire.

In the scattered story of the individual countries we have seen the Turks sweeping into Europe, penetrating to the gates of Vienna. The conquerors used the native Christians as serfs—

unless these were prepared to accept Islam, in which case they were counted and treated as Turks. These Asiatic warriors were, in fact, the Sword-arm of Islam. They did not settle down as agriculturalists in Europe: they remained as conquerors—until they were ejected by force. Their decline was not merely due to their own degeneracy: it was a foolish decision, from the point of view of the Turkish Empire, to organize their subject communities under a religious head: he, although under the Sultan, exercised a great influence. Since the bulk of Turkish subject races belonged to the Orthodox Church, the Greek Patriarch became a great power—and his priests helped to keep alive racial consciousness and culture, and to arouse religious and national faith to fighting pitch at the right moment. Thus, by 1914, the Turks were confined to their present remnant of European territory. To this they hung grimly: it not only was largely populated by Turks, in contrast with the lands they had lost, but was and is the most fertile area of the Turkish domains.

Even before the First World War there were men in Turkey who realized that the old order was doomed. The "Young Turks" were a group of Turkish officers headed by Enver Pasha—another Albanian! Their organization was almost Fascist in its outlook, but it did succeed in introducing some Western ideas into the degenerate state. It failed, because it attempted the impossible: it had to choose between maintaining the Turkish Empire and creating a nationalist Turkish state. It tried to do both.

The Empire in Europe crumbled as soon as the Christian races achieved any degree of unity. In despair, and abandoning the traditional policy of friendship with Britain, Turkey joined the Central Powers in 1914. Her defeat at least solved one problem: the eastern provinces of the Turkish Empire—Arabia, Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia—were irretrievably lost. There remained only one sane course: a Turkish state which was no longer an empire.

It was adopted by one of the most remarkable men of our generation: Mustapha Kemal Pasha—or Kemal Atatürk, as he renamed himself. He abandoned all thoughts of recovering the lost

provinces in Europe and Asia—but he was determined to hold those which were his own. The Greeks, with Allied approval, had landed at Smyrna: Kemal trained his ragged armies, took advantage of the confusion in Greece and the division between the Allies, and cleared the invaders out of Turkey. We have seen his drastic solution—how he deported all the Greek settlers from Turkish territory—and its sequel; for, once the war was concluded, he bore no malice but was willing to be reconciled—and was, in fact, reconciled.

His firm stand, and Allied disunity, gave Turkey much easier terms than had originally been imposed—justifiably imposed, according to the ideas of the day, for Turkey had joined in the attack on her old friends without provocation, and the loser in a gamble must pay. Kemal now cut his losses and began again. Turkey was to be modernized and Westernized. The Sultan, now deposed, had also been the Khalif, supreme spiritual leader of the Moslem world: now the Khalifate was abolished. Turkey became “republican, nationalist, populist, state socialist, secular, and revolutionary.”

Under the new Constitution, Kemal was a virtual dictator. Only his party was allowed to put up candidates for election to parliament. (At one time he did order some of his friends to act as an “opposition,” but the experiment failed and was rapidly terminated!) Kemal’s energy was the driving force of all reforms; yet he did not impose them, but sought to persuade his people that they were necessary. So high was his standing that his Western ideas were accepted: Turkey ceased to be the centre of Islam: as a sign of the change, women abandoned the veil, on Kemal’s orders, and within twenty years were playing as active a part in public life as they do in Britain. Civil laws, on Western lines, replaced the Holy Law based on the Koran, which had governed Turkey for centuries. New education schemes were introduced and flourished; the Arabic alphabet was discarded in favour of the Roman; five-year plans developed the backward industry of the country; long outdated agricultural methods were scrapped as fast as new machinery could be obtained. This is the barest synop-

sis of one of the most interesting records of material progress in history, well deserving of further study.

Yet our present purpose is not an examination of the domestic side of Kemal's reforms—most of them apply to the Turkish mainland in Asia rather than to the rump area in Europe. We must glance briefly at Turkey's position in the Balkans before 1939, her stand now, and her likely trends after the war is over.

## II

The Treaty of Lausanne, which finally closed Turkey's adventures in the First World War, was not signed until 1923. By it Turkey became a reasonably solid national state, with 85 per cent of her population Turkish. She had still some territorial grievances in Asia, but none in the Balkans, once her minority problems with Greece, Bulgaria, and Roumania were solved. The Western Powers were not very popular at that time: Turkey had a dispute with Britain over the Mosul oil-fields, with France over the ownership of Alexandretta, and with Italy a long-standing feud, not eased by Mussolini's declarations of Italy's "historic mission" in the Levant. With Russia, however, Turkey was very friendly—both powers had no cause to love Western Europe—yet the friendship was admittedly of convenience; the Communist Party in Turkey was very sternly banned, like all other potential opposition.

By 1930, however, the internal position of Turkey was consolidated. She was now strong enough to re-enter the realm of international dealings. Her influence was entirely in the direction of Middle East unity. In Asia the policy was successful; in the Balkans there was a great difficulty. All the states were willing to join a pact based upon the *status quo* and mutual security—except Bulgaria, who had territorial claims against all her neighbours. Thus the Balkan Pact was never complete, and we have seen that the absence of Bulgaria rendered it ineffective.

The Turks recognized the Nazi danger before we did: further, their historic antipathy towards Italy prompted stronger ideas

than the feeble and abortive Sanctions. Munich was a severe blow, but Britain's reorientation of policy after the seizure of Czechoslovakia was warmly welcomed. There seemed to be a prospect of a united front in the Balkans, with Britain, France, and Russia as its backers.

The German-Russian Pact of August, 1939, evoked consternation in Turkey. The Foreign Minister, Saracoglu, hurried to Moscow, but was kept hanging about for weeks—to the indignation of the Turks, who have a high sense of dignity. He could achieve nothing, but he abandoned nothing. Turkey proceeded to sign a Pact of Mutual Assistance with Britain and France. If the Western Powers became involved in war as a result of their guarantee to Roumania and Greece, Turkey would help: but an important clause insisted that Turkey should never be involved in war with Russia.

Nevertheless, the warm feelings towards Russia, which had been so noticeable in Turkey for the last twenty years, had suffered severe shocks by the Russian seizure of neighbouring territory in the Baltic states and Poland. Old fears returned—was this only the beginning? Were the dreams of Peter the Great being revived? What the Russians claimed might be perfectly true—that they had expanded their frontiers for security reasons, not imperialist. But, the Turks believed, precisely the same argument might be applied to a march on Constantinople.

The collapse of France upset every calculation. Until then, Turkey could stand firm in front of menaces from Germany and fears of Russia, since there was a strong Allied force by her side in Syria. Now the strength of the situation collapsed in a night. The entry of Italy, our loss of command of the Mediterranean, the crushing Allied defeats, all had their effects. If Turkey had entered the fight, she would have stood virtually alone—a last attempt to secure Balkan unity was defeated by the Yugoslav government. Further, the Turks had little modern equipment, and the experience of France had revealed the power of the modern German war machine. Thus, even when Germany attacked Greece in April, 1941, Turkey stood on one side. By the letter



of her treaty, she should have taken up the fight; Britain did not ask her to implement her pact, for she would have committed suicide—which would have helped very little!

The economic situation was another important factor. The Germans had pursued their usual policy of trade domination, and cornered over 50 per cent of Turkey's foreign trade. Britain did something to counter this influence, with Turkish help. The trouble was that Turkey, an agricultural country, had little for export which the British wanted—we imported a lot of tobacco, trying hard to like it. Nevertheless, we granted considerable credits to Turkey and took an important part in her policy of industrialization.

The entry of Italy into the war almost stopped what trade we had with Turkey—all consignments had to be shipped round the Cape. The Germans, on the other hand, now controlled every mile of the direct land route. In January, 1940, Turkey's exports to Britain were higher than those to Germany. A year later the German figure was 25 per cent higher than ours. Never abandoning their friendship with Britain, it is scarcely surprising that the Turks retreated into a condition of passive neutrality rather than active help. In July, 1941, they signed a modest Pact of Friendship with Germany.

Since then the Germans have striven furiously to strengthen their position—especially since their attack on Russia. They have built on the old historic Turkish fears of Tsarist imperialism. Hitler "revealed" that Stalin had inquired as to German reactions to a Russian annexation of the Dardanelles. It might be a propaganda lie, the Turks argued, but was it not supported by Russian seizure of foreign territory? The early German successes increased Turkish fears from the other angle. She might distrust Russia, but she feared Germany. Whatever way the war turns, Turkish anxiety is acute. If the Germans advance east, their geographical position dominates Turkey: if they retreat, will they demand a passage through Turkey for a flank attack? Or will the Russians make the same demand?

Thus the pact with Germany had little meaning. The Germans would certainly attack Turkey if it suited them: if Turkey had

refused to sign the pact, they would have attacked at once. The pact was a respite and turned out to be more than useful. Despite her precarious military position—with strong German armies in Bulgaria and Greece—Turkey resisted all German inducements and bribes for “co-operation.” Her position is reasonably clear. “We remain true to our alliance with Great Britain,” declared her ambassador. “But every ill considered step must be avoided, for it would only rebound on us and our allies.”

Britain and the United States showed their trust in Turkey when they decided to extend to her the provisions of Lease-Lend. For the first time since 1939, we now have arms to spare; supplies have been shipped to Turkey, and the modernization of her army proceeds apace—of the quality of its men there was never any doubt. The collapse of Italy aroused the greatest enthusiasm in Turkey. Its practical effects were considerable. The Mediterranean is again an Allied sea: no longer does Turkey stand alone.

It is useless to speculate ahead, when an interval of six months elapses between the writing of an appreciation and its appearance in print. The German menace to Turkey appears to have been diminished: with the Balkans in revolt, and Italian aid withdrawn, the Germans appear to be fully occupied. But it is at moments like this that the enemy often adopt unconventional tactics, and the Turks are wary. For over two years a strong German-Bulgarian army has been concentrated on the Thracian border—for although the Bulgars could never be persuaded to fight the Russians, their hereditary friends, it might not be as difficult to persuade them to march against the Turks, their hereditary foes. But there are already signs that Bulgaria seeks no new adventures, but rather a way out of her present commitments.

The Russian success of 1943 reversed Turkish fears. Where would the Russians halt? It is a significant commentary upon the power and contradictions of German propaganda. In the United Nations are people who fear the Russians will halt at their own frontiers: in other countries are people who fear they will not! A great task is before us—the creation of confidence. Here the Americans can play a great part. Russia is frankly suspect by the Turks: nor is Britain entirely trusted—her weakness in

Sanctions and at Munich combines with memories of the Mosul quarrel to leave shadowy fragments of distrust; both governments have striven hard to dispel them. But the United States is *not* suspect in any way: she is believed to take a disinterested view: her immense potential industrial power is appreciated. Her influence in bringing Turkey nearer to her friends may be invaluable.

Many people have been disappointed in Turkey, expecting her to join in the war on the Allied side. Mr. Churchill revealed that she took an unduly gloomy view of Russian prospects, and over-exaggerated the German menace. Thus her government was unwilling to take any decisive step until we had sent supplies which made impossible demands upon our transport. We have therefore discontinued our Lend-Lease programme, and shall proceed to win the Balkan war without Turkish assistance—though we should welcome it. Mr. Churchill acknowledged Turkish collaboration in the control of vital war materials, and looked forward to a continuance of close relations. He made one important comment, however, on Turkish policy: "The course which has been taken so far by Turkey will not, in my view, procure for the Turks the strong position at the peace which would attend their joining the Allies."

It has always been certain that Turkey would defend herself vigorously if attacked. Will she join even now in the war on the Allied side? No nation plunges into war except in her own interest: the decision can only be made by the Turks. But if Turkey were to intervene at the moment of our grand assault, her support might be decisive: I should look for a very early end to the European war. Turkey's decision will be influenced if not determined by conditions in the Balkans, on which she has very decided ideas.

### III

The Turkish policy of today and tomorrow is perfectly clear—one of the few which can be expressed in a phrase—the Balkans for the Balkan peoples.

The Germans offered one fantastic bribe—a revived Turkish Empire in Asia: it was to include Iran, Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan, the Suez Canal, and the Southern Caucasus. The Turks refused to listen: first, because the suggested empire depended upon a German victory, in which they did not believe; second, because they abandoned imperialist ideas over twenty years ago. Turkey has no desire to rule over foreign races—she knows better than anyone the weakness of a forced empire.

Turkey's interests are quite different. She wants no troublesome gambles for power in the Balkans or the Middle East. Permanent German domination would be a disaster, to be opposed at any cost. Nor, in spite of her friendship with Russia during the years when the Soviet was ostracized by Europe, does Turkey wish to see Russia established in the Balkans, either directly or by controlling satellite states. Old suspicions die hard, and Turkey's foreign policy still centres on the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. She believes that the Balkans can work out their own salvation. When the time comes for reconstruction in South-eastern Europe, it seems certain that Turkey will play a worthy and a leading part.

In the meantime, Turkish policy is likely to affect immediate issues vitally. One of our problems continues to be the supply of munitions and food to Russia: the North Cape route is difficult and dangerous, but if we capture the Greek islands the situation is transformed. Our merchant shipping is entitled to pass through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus even in wartime: the Russian fleet is master of the Black Sea. But even then, much would depend upon Turkish friendship: it is not likely to be lacking if we can offer positive assurances against her fears.

## 8

### THE NEW BALKANS

#### I

IT IS AN AMERICAN fashion to base the study of politics on personalities. The mode may be right in America, but it is quite wrong in Europe.

Easily the most read book of its kind in our time was John Gunther's entertaining *Inside Europe*, an excellent example of the current method of study. His chapter on Roumania covered eighteen pages; of these, twelve were devoted to King Carol, and most of these to his personal idiosyncrasies—for example, five were concerned solely with his relations with Madame Lupescu. The peasants, who comprise 78 per cent of the Roumanian population, got a mere mention of three *lines*.

The blame should be placed on us rather than on the author. If his book had featured peasants instead of personalities, hundreds instead of millions would have read it. Our whole outlook on Europe demands an urgent reorientation.

(The European outlook on America has been equally distorted by the same fashion. For every one who has even a superficial knowledge of the problems of the New Deal, share-croppers and labour organizations, a thousand will discuss intimately publicized American personalities, most of them film stars.)

The peasant has a poor publicity value. Ordinary people are seldom interested in ordinary people.

Nor can we sit back and blame scheming politicians and wicked capitalists for the peasant's unhappy lot. The industrial worker has usually tended to look upon his as the exploited class. He is wrong: he himself has exploited the peasant. The universal

demand for cheap food has been the principal cause of peasant distress. The industrial worker has great power, for he can organize and unite; to date the peasant has failed to do either effectively. Yet his potential power is tremendous. If he ever combines to wield it, then the world will have to bow to his will.

The peasant forms two-thirds of the human race. Except in some European countries and the United States, he makes up three-quarters of the population; in India and China, considerably more. He has had an unfair deal throughout history. We picture the French Revolution as a massacre of aristocrats—but two-thirds of all the people executed were peasants. In Russia both Reds and Whites shot down recalcitrant peasants with equal abandon.

The writing of history has been as unfair to him as its course—because of the fact that most historians belonged to the landlord class!

Even those who might have been expected to befriend him held strange ideas: when Karl Marx talked of the oppressed and exploited proletariat, he was not thinking of the peasants, who formed the majority population; on the contrary, he dismissed them rudely as “a separate class of barbarians.” Martin Luther compared them with mad dogs!

In Britain and the United States we are involved in a clash between capital and labour. In peasant areas like the Balkans the clash is between town and country. The town, the marketing centre, makes peasant life difficult by its taxes on the sale of his produce—as heavy as any feudal dues. The product of the tax may be applied to the erection of a new gas-works—but why should the townspeople not pay for this themselves? The town dictates prices to the country, and deliberately keeps them low.

In Sarajevo I saw a peasant hawking a load of wood. He must have worked in the forest for a full day to gather the load: then he had driven it on his mule fifteen miles into town. He wandered round the town, offering it for sale at the very modest price of 14 dinars—about 30 cents. No one would buy. The policy was deliberate: he would get tired of wandering about, and have to

think of his journey home; then he would be glad to sell the load of wood for 7 dinars. The people who beat him down so disgracefully were not wicked capitalists, but ordinary working-men of Sarajevo.

In education the advantage has always been with the town; in social services, especially so. The Balkans are not too well served medically, but contrasts are startling. In the towns (where *all* the hospitals are to be found) there is one doctor to every 700 people; in the country districts, where the proportion ought to be better because of the large and difficult areas to cover, there is one doctor to every 14,000 people.

When local industries are being developed, they must be "protected" by tariffs against foreign competition. Thus the cost of living rises. But the peasant gets no compensating redress—the "workers" must have cheap food, to ensure cheap labour.

The peasant has fallen between the ambitions of the capitalist and those of the socialist. One looks upon him as a tenant to a landlord, the other as a worker in a "wheat factory." He regards himself as neither. Both types have presumed upon his attachment to his plot of soil. His very name is derived from the Latin *pagensis*, "belonging to the land." No name was ever more accurately conceived.

So far the peasant has not exploited his power; consequently his reward has been meagre. His standard of living has always been lower than that of his industrial brother; politically he has been singularly ineffective—and ignored. Even in Russia he has taken second place: at the time of the Revolution he outnumbered the industrial worker by more than two to one: but the soviets formed were of "workers and peasants": not peasants and workers. It is equally significant that the industrial workers, not the peasants, were the driving force of the Revolution. There are many signs that the peasant is about to awake. When he does, cataclysm may follow. If we act early, we can direct his awakening towards happiness and prosperity; if we fail, he may be driven to desperate measures.

We have already noticed the essential cause of Balkan depres-

sion: that the area is crowded—that poor land, already impoverished, is being forced to support a population far beyond its capacity. The inevitable result is a low standard of living. Indeed, many Balkan peasants today are worse off than their fathers were thirty years ago. The population has greatly increased, but the land to support it is no larger: thus the same crops have to be shared among more.

America, with her traditional generosity, will surely not deny a helping hand to the Balkans when she realizes her own share in their present distress. Prior to 1914, an average of 175,000 people emigrated annually from the Balkans, mostly to the United States. They had every encouragement, for they were good workers. American industry was expanding rapidly: cheap labour was in great demand. "Send us your sons. Breed large families—we have work for them all," cried American capital. Thus the population pressure in the Balkans was eased, and the standard of living raised additionally by remittances from the sons who emigrated.

Then, suddenly, the invitation ceased. "America first! Stop flooding us with your cheap workers! American jobs are for Americans!" was substituted. The argument was quite legitimate, for the United States was not entirely responsible for the slump which shook the world; yet its effects in the Balkans were deplorable.

Emigration is likely to be a very live subject when the war is over. Many countries anxiously survey their empty spaces. In Britain the population per square kilometre of arable land is 800; in Japan it is 993; in Germany, 305; in the United States, 66; *in Canada it is 34*. Small wonder that the cries of "living space" find ready listeners. Australia is equally concerned. Both dominions may embark on a new policy, or a revival of an old one. They would prefer settlers of British stock, but the supply is necessarily limited: they want the young men, not the old; the best, not the worst. If their schemes are ambitious, they will certainly have to look farther afield.

They might do worse than to offer facilities to Balkan peoples. These have many advantages, such as the absence of political dif-



ficulties. A German very often remains most obstinately a German of dubious loyalty; the home ties of a man from a small state are sentimental and cultural, seldom political. But, while emigration would be a very useful relief to present Balkan distress—especially if the hundreds of thousands of landless peasants could be transferred—yet it is only a palliative, not a cure. We have apparently come to the end of the period when labour was transported to meet the requirements of capital. If so, then capital must be moved to meet the requirements of labour.

The next and most obvious move is towards the local industrialization of the Balkan states. We have noted that this process has impelled an improved standard of life in Yugoslavia, while that of Roumania and Bulgaria fell. In our planning, nevertheless, we must never overlook the human element—in Bulgaria, we saw, industrial occupations were distasteful to the peasants.

Certainly the whole basis of capital investment needs careful study. Hitherto it has been too elastic and mercurial. There has been nothing Machiavellian in the process. The worker sells his labour where he can get the most satisfactory reward; the financier uses his capital in precisely the same fashion. Yet his actions have been too haphazard. In the period 1924–30, when American-British capital was flooding Europe, its investments in Germany averaged nine dollars per annum per head of the population. The figure for the Balkans—of an equivalent total population—was almost exactly one-tenth. The financier is not a philanthropist: like most other people, he works for profit: there was more immediate profit to be gained from Germany than from the Balkans. But in the long run the dividends were disaster and death.

There are certain obvious industries which call for local establishment—textiles, boots, and other essentials. Already a start has been made. Further, in countries where the mineral output is considerable, dependent industries are overdue. The Balkans missed the industrial boom of the nineteenth century. Similarly they have missed the equalizing processes of our own time. It is a common political argument in Britain that a certain percentage of the population owns a very much larger percentage of the

country's wealth, and a gradual levelling-up is one of our agreed problems. It is equally important to note that the people of Britain, the United States, Germany, and France, representing 13 per cent of the world's population, own more than 50 per cent of its wealth and real income. We are agreed when we call for equal opportunity for all British people. Just as vital is equal opportunity for nations. Certainly this has not yet been achieved or even envisaged. The Balkans are one of the depressed areas of the world.

The establishment of industries must be approached sanely. They should be distributed in type as well as in area. The Balkans need a stock export trade very badly. Every question hinges upon the low standard of life. It is useless to establish boot factories if the peasants cannot afford to buy the boots they manufacture. Today, millions of peasants have no boots whatever: others wear, if anything at all, pieces of old motor tires, tied to their feet with rags.

Here indeed is the crux of the situation: emigration would provide a very useful relief, industrialization a permanent benefit, but the essential Balkan problem is that of world agricultural prices. Local solutions tend to promote equivalent problems elsewhere. If we establish factories in the Balkans, then British, German, and American workers may lose their jobs. The alternative is a steady market for Balkan products, so that goods can be supplied in exchange. Even this elementary remark looks far ahead: for years after the war we shall have to give to the Balkans, not sell to them.

To no inconsiderable extent, the peasant has been responsible for his own misfortunes. His conservatism, that passionate attachment to the soil which is so praiseworthy, his humility, his individualism—all these have contributed to his distress. His fault was that he asked not for too much, but for too little. His ambition must be stirred. Were I a manufacturer of iron ploughs and were trading conditions normal, I would *give* a plough to one peasant in every Bulgarian village. Then my sales propaganda would be simple in its basis: to ensure that no Bulgarian peasant was satisfied until he had an iron plough. The policy of turning luxuries

into necessities has been very successful in America; in the Balkans it is still on a lower plane—turning necessities into essentials.

It is difficult for us to picture the economic status of the Balkan peasant. In one Yugoslav village I was entertained in a cottage; I noticed that my hostess surveyed the tablecloth with some pride, so I commented on it diplomatically. I found that it was the only one in the village—was passed round from house to house for special occasions, birthdays and the like. Yet this was in a village which would have been classed as prosperous by Balkan standards.

In Bulgaria the head of a household or of a village community has a title which reflects local standards of luxury. He is called the *chorbadjia*: the word means literally "meat-eater."

Long years of subjection to foreign rule tended to dull the mind and restrict ambition: the sheer lack of education encouraged a limited outlook. Farther north, in Ruthenia, the peasants were starving as a result of the ravages of the last war. The American Red Cross sent supplies of food, including slabs of chocolate. The hungry people had never seen chocolate before and did not know what it was: eventually they dissolved it in water, and painted their timber cottages with it!

British and Americans, with their usual sympathy and generosity, will readily agree that the raising of peasant standards is a first concern. Yet we have to avoid at all costs our old enemy, the vicious circle. Useless to argue: "Yes, we will give fair prices to the peasant for his goods. But that will mean that our own cost of living will rise, so of course we shall have to demand higher wages, or adjust our profits." The inevitable effect is that prices of manufactured goods rise—and still the peasant cannot afford to buy them.

When we talk of assistance to a state or class, it is some mysterious tribe called "they" who have to do the giving. "They" usually stands for the government: and, whatever the government decides to do, *we* have to pay the bill. Thus, "they" means "us." Immediately the war is over there will arise an urgent cry for economy. So far as this relates to the avoidance of waste, it will

be highly commendable. There is a real danger that it will also be applied to sensible investment by people whose idea is limited to immediate financial return: generosity is the best long-term investment. To raise peasant standards, the rest of the world has to *give*. It is now generally agreed that it is wrong for a British mine-owner to live in plenty while a miner lives on the edge of want: we are taking urgent steps to end this anomaly. But it will be equally wrong for a British miner to live in plenty while a Yugoslav miner starves. Nevertheless, we must consistently remember that our policy is to level up, not to level down.

The new financing of the Balkans (and my comments can be applied to most other depressed areas) can never be satisfactorily undertaken by private capital. The financier looks not only for interest on his loan, but for the eventual return of his money: this is normal commercial practice. It is impossible in the undeveloped countries. A backward country can only repay its loans by fresh borrowings: a nation cannot repay its capital. The world tried to repay its capital debts to America after the last war, and the world economic slump of 1929 was the result—and its effects were as disturbing in the United States as in the debtor countries.

Only governments or, better still, international combinations of governments, can attempt the necessary capitalization of the Balkans. They would make a loan of, say, twenty million pounds to Yugoslavia for the construction of certain agreed factories and their necessary communications. It would be understood that the capital would never be repaid—the factories and the roads *are* the capital, and they must perforce remain in Yugoslavia. After an interim period of three or four years, however, Yugoslavia could pay reasonable interest on the loan. Since the risks which drove up financiers' terms would be lacking, an interest rate of not more than 4 per cent should be adequate—and could be paid. Such a policy, following the greatest generosity in immediate rehabilitation after the war, would affect not only the prosperity of Yugoslavia, but ultimately that of the creditor nations.

The Balkan peasant has blamed his politicians and governments: some of the blame was quite legitimate, but the rest should have

been directed to world political and economic conditions, which were never controlled from the Balkans. Unfortunately, even when the peasant had his chance, he seldom accepted it. More than once peasant leaders found themselves Prime Ministers of their states: they did little more for their fellows than did politicians of other parties. True, they could not control world prices, but they could have cleaned up the systems of administration. Nobody is eager to pay taxes, to which the peasant especially has a violent aversion. We have seen him taxed heavily, even when he was working at a loss—when a population is 80 per cent peasant, obviously he must bear a large share of the financial burden. To pay his taxes he had to sell produce at any price, with the result that it prompted the fall to lower values. When he had done so, a proportion of his money went to pay the interest on foreign loans, a greater proportion to pay the salaries of a needlessly large horde of officials, most of them political nominees. If we felt especially generous, we could cancel our outstanding loans, but only the peasant can remove local excrescences.

(Let me emphasize that the peasant, like most of us, is completely illogical. He demands control of trade, and grumbles when officials are appointed to do the controlling. But he has a grievance lacking in Britain—that thousands of Civil Servants fulfil no useful purpose at all, but are merely appointed to lucrative and sinecure positions by political influence.)

Today there is some concern about the political future of the Balkan peoples. It is as well to recall constantly that the peasant is not very interested in isms. If we can produce a genius who will show him how to make a living for himself and his family out of a ten-acre farm, then he will be a contented and useful member of society.

## II

A thousand times the peasant has revolted: always he has been beaten, because he has never known organization or unity. His revolts have been those of despair, not of ambition.

Nor has he ever received much encouragement from those who should have been his friends. The Bulgarian peasant leader, Stamboliski, before he was murdered in 1923, outlined a novel plan for a "Green International," a close association between the peasants of the world—even intimate political collaboration between peasant states. Organized industrial labour was scarcely interested—Green Internationals were apparently not as important as Red ones; influential powers, including Britain and Russia, were indifferent or hostile. The plan died: but its influence lived on.

Balkan peasant political parties had a brief success after the last war; then they allowed themselves to be split asunder, and the way to reaction was opened. The peasant reverted to a bondage not very different from that which he had always suffered. He was inarticulate, and so scattered that organization was difficult. His submersion was completed by the German invasion. He fought in two ways—actively in the mountains, passively in the fields, producing the minimum rather than the maximum, so that the German loot should be small. Maybe he did not appreciate the character of his oppressors, who took what they needed and left him with a miserable remainder.

Yet, in his submergence, a great fire smoulders. When the volcano suddenly becomes active, its eruption may have violent effects.

There is some fear in Britain and America lest the Balkans should go "Communist." Hitherto the Communist elements have been comparatively small—though, as always, vocal, active, and enterprising. They consist mainly of "intellectuals"—educated men who have found no suitable place in government or business circles—and landless peasants, to whom no lot could ever be worse than that they now experience. The Balkan peasants who own their land—and they form the vast majority—are *not* Communists: on the contrary. Yet they are very dissatisfied, and have very many legitimate discontents: men in such a mental state are apt to turn towards the leaders who promise most.

Only in very advanced countries is the gradual revolution possible: we live in the midst of one in Britain, so gradual that some

people scarcely perceive the many changes by which a Conservative government passes legislation which would have been considered hopelessly socialistic a generation ago. The more usual method is that of force: in a moment of confusion and division, a minority of energetic people who know exactly what they want can easily impose their will upon the unorganized mob. If Communism comes to the Balkans, it is likely to come in this fashion. As a creed, it is not attractive to the Balkan peasant, and is unlikely to be—unless we fail to offer something better.

Among the Balkan people who escaped at the time of the German invasion were a number of peasant leaders. They have not wasted their time: not only have they been in the forefront of the battle for freedom, they have been looking ahead. While the Germans have been setting the peasants of Eastern Europe against one another by exploiting ancient antagonisms, their exiled leaders have made an excellent beginning to a programme of advancement. All the Balkan countries except Albania were represented at a peasant conference in London, with Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia in addition. Discussions lasted for three months: the delegates acclaimed the Atlantic Charter as a basis of progress: they condemned the Nazi idea of a "New Order," by which Germany would become the industrial dictator of Europe, with the peasant states as poor dependencies, their sole purpose being to supply cheap food and labour. Then they provided to implement the Atlantic Charter with what might be called the Peasants' Charter. It makes very interesting reading.

#### THE TWELVE POINTS OF THE EASTERN EUROPEAN PEASANT PROGRAMME

The signatories of the present Peasant Programme have agreed upon twelve points, starting from the assumption that the raising of the peasants' standard of life is the necessary precondition for the progress of the whole nation, but denying that there is any inevitable hostility between the rural and urban interests.

(1) "The Land for the Peasant" is proclaimed as the watchword,

and the expropriation of large estates is demanded. The main basis on which a sound and progressive agricultural community can be built up is that of individual and peasant-owned farms; but the desirability of voluntary co-operation in land cultivation is recognized. Safeguards are demanded against dispossession of the peasant or alienation of his land, and the consolidation of peasant holdings is held to be a necessary sequel to land reform.

(2) The experience of the past twenty years having proved that such land reforms alone are not enough, the Co-operative Principle must be promoted in every possible way, and the peasants should control marketing, credit, etc., through their own institutions, democratically controlled.

(3) Agricultural Credit is a prime necessity for the peasant, and Central Banks are needed, with a large measure of local initiative and control. There must be a system of public agricultural insurance.

(4) Stability of prices is especially vital to the peasantry and must be regulated both on a national and on an international scale.

(5) The need for a balanced agriculture is accepted, based upon a greater variety of crops, scientifically planned.

(6) Among the most essential measures of agricultural improvement are: (*a*) drainage, irrigation, and hydro-electric power; (*b*) soil improvement and fertilizing; (*c*) provision of agricultural machinery and tools; (*d*) seed improvement and scientific stock breeding.

(7) Extension of agricultural and technical education, on a democratic basis.

(8) A comprehensive scheme of rural welfare, based on a competent medical service.

(9) A well balanced rural society requires the combination of appropriate industries with agriculture: only thus can the grave problem of overpopulation on the land and congestion of the cities be held in check.

(10) Improvement of communications by rail, road, and water, sea and air transport, on the basis of a co-ordinated plan for the whole region.

(11) Each country in the area has its own special national interests, and may require to protect them by import restrictions: but there is an overriding purpose common to the whole Peasant Community from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. It is necessary to rise above the exaggerated nationalism of the nineteenth century and to combine



in the common struggle against Nazi tyranny. When, with the aid of Britain, America, and the Soviet Union, freedom has been regained, the nations of this region must bury past feuds and show the world that they have a common purpose.

(12) The execution of such a programme will largely depend on the extent of the help forthcoming from Britain, America, and Soviet Russia. A common plan of reconstruction, based on the supply of food, industrial products, and raw materials in the period immediately following the war, is absolutely vital and will lead to a long-term policy of closer trading relations. But the greater allies must recognize that liberation can only lead to improved conditions for all, if they are prepared to join in sustained effort of long-term reconstruction, based on scientific methods and democratic practice.

This programme was signed by Dimitre Matzanfieff (Bulgaria), Ladislav Feierabend, Jan Lichner (Czechoslovakia), Vrasidas Capernaros (Greece), Arnold Dániel, Michael Károlyi (Hungary), Witold Kulerski, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk (Poland), Pavel Pavel (Roumania), Rudolf Bicanić, Fran Gabrovšek, Milan Gavrilović (Yugoslavia).

Few reasonable people would quarrel with the main conclusions of this document, admirably sober even if it includes a few hopeful idealisms among its practical clauses. Only one or two comments are necessary.

The demand for the expropriation of large estates (Clause 1) comes automatically from a peasant gathering. It should be remembered, however, that the further effects of this would be minor, since the bulk of the big estates in the Balkans (except in Albania) have already been divided up. In Bulgaria only 6 per cent of the land is covered by farms of more than 30 hectares (75 acres). In Yugoslavia and Greece small peasant farms easily predominate, and even in Roumania there is a limit to individual holdings of 300 hectares, and only 15 per cent of the area is covered by farms of this size. Even to take every remaining acre from the former landlords would only provide land for a few hundred thousand peasants—who already work on that same land as labourers. The move would have considerable moral effects

and might thus be worth while, but it would still leave a very large number of landless peasants in the Balkans.

While the desire of a peasant is to own his own land, the results of the expropriation of estates has not always been fortunate. Governments, with peasants pressing them on every hand, tried to make the share-out as wide as possible. This resulted in very small farms—to be further subdivided when a peasant died and left several sons. The average Balkan farm is of less than twelve acres, often of poor land, and it has to support a family of about eight people.

Here is a strange phenomenon: while the Balkan peoples were dividing up their large estates into small farms, the Russians were combining the small farms into collective estates! Their method has resulted in a considerable increase in production: a peasant farmer is economically bound to primitive methods, while a large estate can use tractors and fertilizers. The Balkan method is undoubtedly the poorer though the comparison is not always direct: tractors could operate with profit on the Danubian plains, but not in narrow and isolated mountain valleys. Further, with the present state of Balkan overpopulation, the increased use of machinery has tended to increase agricultural unemployment.

But this side of peasant progress has probably gone too far to be halted: no economic argument can compete with the pride of ownership. Further, the argument around small and large farms can be confused by political backgrounds. Large farms in Russia have helped to raise the standard of life; but the agricultural worker of Hungary, who is also employed on large estates, is no better off than his Balkan neighbour. On the other hand, the small property system *has* worked excellently in Scandinavia and Czechoslovakia, where living standards are considerably higher even than in Russia, and far above those of the Balkans. The inference is that the peasant proprietorship system can prosper only under democratic conditions.

Certainly Balkan peasants would be likely to rise in revolt against any government which sought to deprive them of their hard-won land. They are satisfied with the basis of the system of

land tenure, if not with its workings: the only malcontents, who might seize any alternative offered, are the landless peasants. Yet the Peasants' Programme rightly insists upon the necessity for co-operation (Clauses 1 and 2).

The idea is no more new in the Balkans than in Russia. We have already noted that in many villages forest and grazing lands are communal property (as they were in England before the Enclosure of the Commons at the end of the eighteenth century, which converted thousands of yeomen into farm labourers), and that work in the common interest is allocated by the village elders. A hundred years ago the favourite Balkan system of agricultural life was the *zadruga*—the real ancestor of the Russian collective farm. The *zadruga* was a farming community, usually composed of relatives. The land was worked in common: all profits went to the *zadruga* in general, not to an individual. Only clothing and tools were personal property: when a peasant died, there was no question of his son's individual inheritance of the land—his son merely succeeded to a share in the *zadruga*. A girl who married outside her tribe might receive a dowry of cattle, but never of land. There are still *zadrugas* surviving in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria—and, in a different form, in Albania.

This is but one example of ancient co-operative farms; there are many others. Most are based upon practical considerations of mutual interest. In a land of timber houses, fire is a deadly enemy. Should a cottage catch fire, it is an unwritten law that every person should help to fight it. Co-operative work at rush seasons is quite common—it is not unknown, naturally, in Western Europe, nor in England or America. In some Yugoslav districts flourishes a system called the *moba*, in which the entire community lends aid in planting and harvesting the crops of each of its members. There are even competitions with prizes for the hardest workers, again a system adapted to the needs of the Russian collective farm.

Much remains to be done in community organization, but it is never difficult to develop on an inherited historical basis. More ambitious, but not less essential, is the other form of co-operation

envisaged in the Peasants' Programme: buying, marketing, and credit. In the division of communal labour, only the peasant can help himself; in the wider sphere he needs outside aid.

The Programme also insists, quite properly, on a well balanced combination of industries (Clause 9). It seems to imply rural industries rather than the creation of congested cities. In this it is perhaps wise, otherwise the differences between urban and rural conditions might be overstrongly emphasized. No one has yet succeeded in marrying the varied and sometimes conflicting needs and ideals of industrial and agricultural workers. The factory hand, if dissatisfied with his lot, looks to state control or nationalization as his panacea: state control or nationalization is the very last thing a peasant farmer wants.

We are witnessing an interesting experiment in Canada. A new party has been formed—the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, or C.C.F. It has already had some success, and if it can avoid the usual American political pitfalls it may have more. It advocates nationalization of urban industries, but co-operation in agriculture. Thus it has made an appeal both to factory hand and to farmer, solving a difficulty which many socialist movements have failed to overcome.

It is interesting to compare the Peasants' Charter with the principles suggested by Stamboliski's Green International, which first met at Passau, Bavaria, in 1920, and established a consultative bureau at Prague in 1921. Its members were the Czechoslovak, Bulgarian, Polish, and Yugoslav Peasant parties. Stamboliski and his fellow-peasants declared:

(1) Men cannot be free unless they have the elementary right to own private property. Thus, if all men are to be free, property must be shared among them—which means that each share will be small: that is to say, a peasant system is the key to any economy.

(2) All the Balkan and neighbouring Slavs should form a Confederation of Peasant States.

(3) Democracy is essential to peasant progress: neither dictatorship nor mob rule is compatible with it.

The Green International, despite its informal basis and foreign

opposition, did a good deal of very useful work, especially in the Balkans. Its educational ideas were particularly valuable. A "Peasant University" was established at Zagreb, running special courses for farmers in the slacker agricultural seasons. The many co-operative societies, too, did not halt their activities at selling fertilizers and marketing produce. They sent round teachers to the peasant villages—cultural leaders as well as agricultural scientists. They were, in fact, propagandists of the peasant creed.

They failed in their main objective: the Green International remained an elusive ideal. External influences were hostile: at home in the peasant countries, governments discouraged the scheme, claiming that the movement was "Communist." Yet the most powerful obstructionist was the peasant himself: he had the power by his vote to make the idea live, but he was too ignorant and unorganized to know how to use it. Above all, he was suspicious, even of his own leaders: so far from being a Communist, he has always been an Individualist. He saw in the scheme a new form of central control, his greatest aversion.

Yet many of the effects remain. Up to the moment of the war the co-operatives continued to mount in numbers and strength. And the ideas they have implanted are not likely to die.

### III

In 1885 the freed Bulgars had to decide on a prince. Remembering how the Roumanians had secured unity, and appreciating their own insecurity, the Bulgars made a very interesting proposal—that they should invite the King of Roumania to be their ruler in a new dual monarchy. Even then it was envisaged that this might be the foundation of a United Balkans. But the Great Powers frowned upon so sensible a suggestion. Each wanted to use the little Balkan states as its puppets. The Tsar of Russia was especially annoyed: he looked upon Bulgaria as a stepping-stone towards Constantinople: Balkan unity was the last thing in the world he wanted. The Bulgars gave in to foreign pressure, and accepted the inevitable German princeling.

Long before that, every effort of the Balkan peoples towards unity had been repressed. Immediately the first small principality of Serbia had gained its freedom, its Prime Minister, Garashanin, drew up a plan for a Balkan Union. For once the Tsars and Hapsburgs were united in their indignation, and Garashanin was forced from office. Unity is strength, and the Great Powers wanted the monopoly of strength.

There never was a greater hypocrisy than that of Austria and Russia when they proclaimed as their sole concern the freeing of the Balkan Christians from the Turkish yoke. They were determined to keep their protégés weak and pliable: they sent the Balkan races into battle with one another—and supplied arms for the combat. Any subversive movement could depend upon practical support from one side or the other.

For a brief space after 1918 the Balkans were left to themselves. Then again the struggle for power began. The Balkan Entente, which might have developed into a strong federation, was undermined by outside influence. Italy was frankly opposed to it, since it would curtail her Balkan ambitions; nor was Russia very friendly. Even Britain and France, with most to gain, were too intent on the appeasement of Italy to support a step which might have secured the peace of South-eastern Europe—and would certainly have altered the course of the war, in our favour.

Yet there exists in the Balkans an instinctive urge towards unity. Here is yet another paradox—that the Balkan peoples have been freely blamed for their neglect to unite, whereas always the disruptive element has been external influence. Thus political communion has been denied; but there are other bonds, which have transcended even vexed racial differences.

We have already commented on the first unifying factor: that the bulk of the Balkan peoples are peasants. As tillers of the soil, they share the same problems, have the same complaints. Their languages may differ, but their culture is of common origin, for it is based on the peasant civilization of the spoken word. Their traditions, arts, and crafts are passed on from generation to generation. An illiterate peasant may easily have a greater store of real

knowledge than many Englishmen who would call themselves educated. His memory, compared with that of the industrial mass-production worker, is formidable. He can design and build his own home, with simple tools; he can weave cloth and make most of his modest requirements; he is not dependent upon factories for the essentials of life. I have said that the peasant is indestructible: his civilization cannot be destroyed until *all* of his kind have been wiped out of existence.

He has seen great empires rise and fall: his home and fields have been burned or plundered. Economic depressions, wars, and pestilences have brought him misery and famine, but he could not be destroyed. The survival of the peasant is one of the wonders of history.

Common suffering and common ambitions can form a great bond. The Serbian peasant may be the brother of the Serbian miner: he is also the brother of the Roumanian peasant.

The second bond is that of religion. There are important Roman Catholic and Moslem elements in the Balkans, but the great majority of the people belong to the Greek Orthodox Church. It is a religion of peasant people; most of the priests are of peasant origin, living simply with their own folk.

We have already noted the tremendous influence of the Orthodox Church during the long Turkish night, when the Sultans allowed it considerable sway. To the oppressed Christians the Church was the symbol of liberty as well as of faith. Through the long centuries of Moslem captivity the Orthodox Church preserved a spiritual unity which no subsequent wars or peace treaties have been able to impair.

Mentally and spiritually, there is no bar to Balkan unity; on the contrary, there are powerful ties of culture, economic interest, and religion. The difficulties have arisen on the political field, where the peasants are inexperienced, unorganized, and almost at the mercy of foreign intrusion.

Today there is a powerful movement towards a Balkan Federation. It is meeting with opposition from without—most important from Russia. German reactions are significant. Until the late

autumn of 1943 all her policy was directed to the weakening of the Balkans. This is still her policy and always will be, for she could never dominate a united state. Only her method changed. When it became clear to her leaders that Germany was unlikely to win the war, they immediately tried to organize a Balkan Federation. The argument was obvious: after victory, popular opinion among the United Nations will insist that everything the Germans did during the war was automatically wrong, and must be undone. Thus the Balkan Federation will be dissolved—which is exactly what the far-sighted German planners want!

(In considering all questions of Balkan federation, one saving thought must always be borne in mind. The Balkan Entente failed because it did not include Bulgaria, a country under Italian influence and with territorial claims on her neighbours. Again this country will provide many difficulties. By her conduct she has incurred hatred in Yugoslavia and Greece: a federation to succeed depends above all things on confidence, and it is absurd to pretend that this exists today. Time and patience are necessary to eradicate painful memories. Thus our planning should be considered as for tomorrow rather than for today.)

Nations cannot be forced into federation. There is nothing automatic about Balkan union. If the idea were merely born of war and despair, it would weaken in years of peace and prosperity. To succeed, the federal idea must be firmly accepted on its own merits by the mass of the people concerned. It must be emphasized as a permanent plan, not a temporary palliative: otherwise in each country secessionist parties would arise, to seize and aggravate the many difficulties which are bound to appear in the new organization. All successful existing federations, like the United States and Canada, have been formed of areas which already had a long history of political association before their formal unity; in the Balkans the situation is more difficult, for here is a loose collection of independent states. Progress is going to be intensely difficult; yet the vitals of success are already present—common interests, the overwhelming will to freedom, the brotherhood of the peasant and of a common religion. I believe that



union, to safeguard their independence, is the goal of the great majority of the Balkan peoples, save only the old men who cannot forget their ancient feuds. Faith can overcome difficulties.

## IV

"Here let me ask, What would be thought of an army which consisted only of battalions and brigades and which never formed any of the larger and higher organizations like army corps? It would soon get mopped up.

"It would therefore seem to be, at any rate, worthy of patient study that side by side with the Great Powers there should be a number of groupings of states and confederations which would express themselves through their own chosen representatives, the whole making a council of great states and groups of states.

"All this will, I believe, be found to harmonize with the high permanent interests of Britain, the United States and Russia."

These very sensible words were uttered by Mr. Winston Churchill in his "reconstruction" or "Four Year Plan" broadcast of March 12, 1943. They confirmed an idea I developed earlier in *The New Europe*, in which I suggested a series of regional federations as a first step towards European and world unity. Human outlook is limited: one of the causes of the failure of the League of Nations lay in the fact that its scope and geography were too wide. The approach to any form of commonwealth should be gradual, for the prejudices and traditions of a thousand years of history must be overcome.

The approach is simplified if mutual interests are involved: in the past, it was too much to expect that Peru should be intimately concerned in a threat to Bulgaria. We have seen that the Balkans have no basic geographic unity, but there are strong human ties which will overcome geographic difficulties if directed aright. If we are to have federations at all, there is no area where the idea is as vital as in South-eastern Europe: nor is it anywhere more feasible, with the possible exception of Scandinavia.

I have said that regional federations are only the beginning.

They would be a powerful deterrent to future aggressors, but they would not remove the possibility of war. The United Nations, if they retain their unity of purpose, should be able to ensure that period of peace which would be essential to the establishment and development of the new idea. Once federation has proved itself, once states have given up portions of their sovereign rights and have gained in prosperity and happiness, then we can look forward with assurance and ambition to an extension of the scheme.

From the defensive point of view, Balkan federation needs no argument. Hitherto the small Balkan states have been involved in war, always divided among themselves, because of the machinations of the Great Powers. They could always be tackled one by one, as Hitler found to his delight: by playing on ancient animosities and unsettled quarrels, he could not only set the Balkan peoples against one another, but divide them within themselves.

His weapons were economic pressure and fear. The Balkan races, among the bravest in the world, knew that a small country of 15,000,000 people, inadequately armed, cannot stand up to a powerful nation of 80,000,000, superbly armed. Together, the Balkans form a solid block of 51,000,000 people (with a further 15,000,000 in Asiatic Turkey). Instead of a series of small armies with differing equipment, they could present a solid force with standard equipment and training. It would have the confidence of numbers; the old inferiority complex would disappear. Fighting in defence of its own land, over familiar country, it would be a very formidable opponent, not to be tackled lightly even by powerful aggressors. Such a solid background of unity would create that atmosphere of confidence necessary to economic and political development. Our hope is that we have reached the end of the era of force; but we must not be surprised if the Balkan peoples, who have seen an aspect of war far more ferocious than anything we ever witnessed or conjectured, think first of security. Our first task is to direct the idea towards mutual protection.

Economically, we shall see, the case for federation is just as strong. The economic problems of the Balkan states are almost

identical—Greece alone is on a different basis. The grumbles of a peasant in Roumania are the same as those of a peasant in Yugoslavia. The countries are not competitive, but complementary: indeed, their trouble has been that individually they have never been able to raise the peasant standard of life.

Yet even this eases the path to federation, which can only be successfully accomplished between countries where standards are approximately level. There could be no immediate political union between, say, Holland and Bulgaria—otherwise Holland would be flooded with cheap Balkan labour, or Dutch factories would be moved to Bulgaria. In the Balkans standards are so low as to be almost equal.

(My continuous insistence on Balkan standards of living should not be misunderstood. In normal times there is probably less hunger in the peninsula than in industrial countries: a peasant seldom starves. But his diet is hopelessly monotonous, and merely supports life and energy. Most other essentials to living are sadly lacking, and luxuries are almost unknown.)

The Balkan Pact was no more than a temporary alliance, incomplete at that. A Balkan Federation, to mean anything at all, must be a permanent structure. Individually, the component states would retain the widest measures of autonomy; yet such powers as are allocated to the federal government must be freely and firmly given up. These would necessarily include defence, foreign policy, and international economic agreements. There would, of course, be no tariffs as between the constituent states—except, perhaps, in the early stages of the federation, while the small differences in costs and standards of living were being levelled up.

Defence would be directed by a federal minister, with a common general staff. Each country would supply its own units—if only because of language difficulties, it would be foolish to brigade Greeks with Roumanians: as today it would be madness to brigade together races brooding over historic wrongs. Scottish history reveals this folly: unity was difficult because the mutual hatred of the clans was often greater than that of the common enemy. Nevertheless, it would be an advantage if a Balkan soldier

spent a portion of his army service in another state. The gain in the adoption of uniform equipment and training would be enormous.

Foreign affairs would also be directed federally. There would probably be many difficulties before a smooth working method was evolved. In every federal council or parliament a language difficulty is inherent, but this has been overcome in Switzerland—and at Geneva. There is an opportunity here for a language like Esperanto—or Basic English. The mutually satisfactory composition of the federal government is of the highest importance.

There will be many differences in local legislation, some of them tending to clash with mutual interests. A federal judicial council, on the lines of the American Supreme Court or the British Privy Council Appeal Court, will be necessary.

Each country would choose its own form of government. In spite of their experiences, some of the Balkan states might still prefer monarchies to republics. There is reason to believe that kingship and cultivation developed together in the dawn of history—probably in Egypt. They are integral parts of the same age-old culture. A king in a uniform is known and understood in peasant circles, but a politician in a frock-coat is distrusted. A modicum of pageantry appeals to the ordinary mind: Stalin knew what he was doing when he exchanged his peasant's coat for a marshal's uniform. God is traditionally visualized as a King even in our own sophisticated and democratic culture: still more among a pious peasantry. The people of the Balkans never visualized God as a peasant, and their artists have usually painted Christ in the vestments of a Byzantine Emperor, with attendant angels in Roman uniforms. More important is the argument that many peasants believe a king to be less liable to political intrigue than a politician-president.

There is no reason on earth why both monarchies and republics should not be included within the same federation. Even today, many monarchies are far more democratic than some republics! When Mr. Churchill made his offer of "solemn unity" with France, the question of different political forms had no influence:

quite rightly. This point, though much discussed, need cause no concern in any question of Balkan federation.

Nevertheless, one common basis is essential for successful unity: a democratic form of government. A democracy could never federate with a totalitarian state. A state which exists for the welfare of the individual cannot work in close partnership with a country where the individual exists merely for the benefit of the state. While local governments in a federation can vary in many details, some kind of Declaration of the Rights of Man must be agreed as a fundamental basis. It would need to include clauses guaranteeing in all constituent states (*a*) freedom of speech, (*b*) freedom of the press, (*c*) detached and impartial justice, (*d*) freedom of association in political parties or industrial groups, (*e*) free elections by secret ballot, (*f*) no discrimination on account of political opinions, religious creeds, or race, (*g*) educational opportunities, (*h*) freedom of private life, (*i*) the right to work. It would be forbidden to establish dictatorships, which can only be removed by force or revolution, in place of parliaments, which can be removed by popular vote.

These things will not strike British or American readers as revolutionary, for we have enjoyed most of them for many years. But, if successfully adopted in Balkan countries, they would envisage a state of affairs almost heavenly. We must never forget that few European countries have ever experienced true democracy, even at its mildest definition.

The biggest difficulties—and ultimately the greatest benefits—are likely to be economic. The federal treasury would draw its funds proportionately from the constituent states and would negotiate foreign loans. Federal expenditure would cover defence and foreign policy: a large reserve would be needed for common and domestic investment. While the central funds might be contributed in block sums from the states, certain indirect taxes and customs duties are especially suitable to provide the current income of a federal government.

The internal economy of the federation is of the utmost importance. Hitherto the overcrowded Balkans have had to export

food badly needed at home, in order to provide foreign currency for the most essential manufactured goods. Except where grain can be grown in huge quantity, as in Roumania, we should cease to regard the Balkans primarily as grain-exporting countries. The considerable mineral products should be developed, and used to a far greater extent at home. There is a shortage of coal, but ample water power is available. Transport needs very considerable advancement: such railways as exist do not always meet the requirements of their own districts, as they were generally built at the dictation or suggestion of foreign powers, the lines being traced according to strategic or political considerations. Most urgent is a vast road-making programme, which would also have the advantage of employing surplus labour while the new industrial policy was gaining ground. Finance is a prime consideration: long-term credits are essential if the federation is to make a sound beginning. A continuation of the Lend-Lease policy for a few years after the war might usher in a new economic era.

There are immense difficulties, of detail as well as of principle. If we are determined, they can be overcome. If we are lazy or uninterested, we must not grumble when other people undertake the solution of the Balkan problem, even if their methods do not commend themselves to us. We shall be blind or mad if we stand aside: if we decide on action, we must be prepared to be generous. Balkan unity is vital to European peace, and that is a reward for which it is worth while to pay a high price. One week's cost of this war would have revolutionized the economic situation of the Balkans—and might have shortened the course of the war by a year. We are not asked to dole out charity, but to help people to help themselves—or, at any rate, to stop keeping them from helping themselves.

## v

Since the Balkans in themselves have at the moment an unbalanced economic basis for unity, a more ambitious scheme has been suggested, and its basic idea has gained ground rapidly. The

suggestion is the incorporation of the Balkan states in a Middle Zone or Central European Federation, which would also include Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

(The present feudal Hungary would scarcely fit into any democratic federal scheme, but the country is likely to experience very considerable changes in the immediate aftermath of the war. Otherwise, indeed, the Yugoslavs would never consider a federation which included Hungary, for they are naturally bitter about the treachery of their neighbour in 1941 and about her subsequent conduct. Further, they fear anything which savours of a revival of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. Some people would also include Austria in the scheme, but this obviously depends largely upon the wishes and outlook of the Austrians. Briefly, while Hungary would be important, even vital, to the success of the idea, Austria would not. At the same time, Austria can scarcely exist independently.)

Very many arguments favour the scheme. Between the Baltic and the Aegean are eleven sovereign states, individually weak and potential victims for any predatory power. United, and in close co-operation with Western Europe and Russia, a Central European Federation could almost guarantee European peace.

All the countries have common interests; all suffered long periods of foreign domination; all have fallen under the German yoke. Hitherto fear of their powerful neighbours has been the dominating feature of their individual policies: weak themselves, they sought protectors—generally the one *not* their neighbour. Thus countries bordering Germany sought Russian friendship and interest, as Czechoslovakia; those bordering Russia accepted German “protection,” like Roumania. Obviously such a course led direct to strife.

The resources of the Middle Zone are considerable. Added to Balkan products are the mines and agriculture of Poland, the fertile Hungarian plains, and the very important factories of Czechoslovakia. Its economy would be more stable and better balanced than a Balkan union alone—always after making patient allowances for difficulties in early stages; for example, the stand-

ard of living in Czechoslovakia is considerably higher than that in any other of the prospective partners.

Above all, the suggested federation has man-power. The total population exceeds 120,000,000. The massation would menace no one. A confederation will fight well in defence, but never in attack: allies always quarrel among themselves in aggressive wars. The Middle Zone would be well placed strategically to defend itself against Germany—though even for this Russian backing would be advisable. It is *not* well placed for attack on Russia: this idea, indeed, is fantastic in view of the characteristic outlook of some of its members.

The Germans appreciated the importance of the Baltic-Balkan bloc. The region, plus Russian Ukraine, was to be the German empire in Europe. The plan failed because force was the method employed, and because of the resistance of the peoples concerned. If it had succeeded, Germany would have become master of Europe. With 120,000,000 people and vast economic resources added to her own, she could have defied the world. Maybe even now we do not realize the full debt of gratitude we owe to the small states which fought for their freedom, knowing from the first shot that they were doomed to incalculable suffering.

They should be able to depend upon our generosity in reconstruction. Were they free and able to fight in greater strength by our side, Britain and America would gladly supply to the submerged countries scores of millions of dollars' worth of armaments on a Lend-Lease basis—and Lend-Lease is a euphemism for a gift. After victory, it is not too much to ask that we should Lend-Lease implements of peace to assist in their recovery.

The objectives of a Central European Federation would be similar to those of a Balkan Union: common measures for security and finance, with the maximum of individual sovereignty for each constituent state. One difficulty arises: some of the countries involved are much larger than others; a federation could not thrive on domination by the greatest, while at the same time a nation of thirty million people is entitled to demand a greater share of con-



trol as well as of responsibility than a nation of three million. The difficulty might be met by borrowing freely from the American Constitution—for precisely the same difficulty was encountered in its formation. The Federal government might consist of two houses: the Lower House of members from each country proportionate in number to populations: the Upper House, or Senate, of two representatives from each country, large or small. Every constituent state would be represented in the Federal Government Cabinet.

While matters like education and justice would be administered locally, at the earliest possible moment the present conflicting standards should be levelled up to a common average. Federal universities would be a boon, as would travelling scholarships, whereby Roumanian students could study in Greece. In the field of justice, there would be needed immediately some equivalent to the British Privy Council or the American Supreme Court, to decide on conflicting issues—and there would inevitably be many in the early years.

Economically the federation would stand close together. Until the standard of living had been raised in the backward countries, the richer states would assist their poorer brothers. The necessity for planning in agriculture and industry might mean hardship to some areas in the period of transformation; this should be mitigated by the contribution of the areas which would correspondingly gain. Reasonable assistance by Britain, the United States, and Russia would greatly reduce the length of the experimental period of development, and would make a great contribution to the happiness, prosperity, and security of 120,000,000 people who have suffered grievously. It would also make a great contribution to the cause of world peace, and thus have vital effects upon our own happiness, prosperity, and security.

I have only outlined the federal scheme superficially, but it is being studied in detail. It is a staggering commentary that our ignorance of Central and South-eastern Europe is quite unnecessary: in Britain there are any number of knowledgeable men, could they but get the general public interested. Two British

organizations have devoted very careful study to the problems of federation in the Middle Zone.

The first is the Danubian Club, an offshoot of the Fabian Society; the second, the Middle Zone Commonwealth Association. Each has representatives of all Eastern European countries among its membership.

In addition, a corresponding movement is active in the United States. There again a number of exiles favour Central European Federation, from the Baltic to the Aegean, and a provisional committee has been formed.

Yet the outstanding difficulty in achieving unity has not yet been surmounted. Both the British and American governments regard Central European or Balkan Federation benevolently; both blessed the embryo arrangements between Poland and Czechoslovakia and between Yugoslavia and Greece. Mr. Churchill's quoted comments are straight to the point, and in America there has always existed some irritation because the Balkan states did *not* get together. The Germans, naturally, do not want Balkan unity at any price—unless it were within a German-dominated Central Europe. We are not bound to take much heed of German opinion, but we must give due consideration to Russian opinion. The most important factor is the view of the peoples concerned.

To date Russian opinion has been adverse. Russian reactions, reflected by Communists abroad, seem to regard the proposed federation as a *cordon sanitaire* directed against Russia—a capitalist or imperialist menace backed by "fascist barons." All three organizations in Britain and the United States have been vigorously attacked on this basis in the Russian press. The suggestion is rather strange when it is recalled that the Danubian Club is an offshoot of the Fabian Society, and the American committee is largely composed of Socialist and Peasant representatives! But past history has shown that Communists have attacked Democratic Socialist ideas as consistently and sometimes with more fervour than they have attacked Conservative doctrines.

The Soviet weekly *War and the Working Class* has been espe-

cially bitter, labelling the Middle Zone idea as a "Polish screen for fascists and quislings." We need not take very seriously the opinions of this journal. A great friend of Russia, Mr. Eden, dealt with it very faithfully, when it claimed that prior to the German attack on Russia the heart of the British working classes was not in the war—that is to say, when men and women worked to the bone in those 1940 days of peril, when we stood alone! As Mr. Eden said, a man who will believe that will believe anything.

But, while Soviet publications are often used for "flying kites" and testing reactions, as in other countries, it is certainly true that Russia has to date been unfavourable to federal schemes in Eastern Europe. There is a tendency in some British quarters to ignore unpleasant facts—indeed, to pretend that they do not exist. Such a comfortable policy is utterly unsuited to consideration of the practical difficulties of today, and we must face up sternly to realities.

The moment is ripe for frank speaking, as between friends. Certainly the Russians would prefer it—I have always found them very outspoken and themselves delighting in plain speech. Many issues have become unnecessarily clouded because of some hypersensitiveness about hurting Russian feelings: such hypocritical consideration for other people's feelings has never been a Russian failing, nor one which they appreciate.

This unhealthy outlook has obscured or completely hidden many problems which should have been discussed openly. Few if any are direct clashes of interest between Britain and Russia: there is no logical reason why they should not be considered dispassionately. The co-operation envisaged by the Anglo-Russian Treaty can only be based upon mutual confidence: this depends upon mutual understanding, itself generated by frank discussion. Few British, and fewer Russians, would object to this assumption.

## VI

It is still very difficult for many people in Britain (and also, I understand, in America) to take an objective view of Russia. There are many who believe that Stalin is always right—a faculty

he has never claimed for himself! The only man who claimed complete political infallibility was Mussolini!

On the other hand, there are still people who are suspicious of everything Russian—though the basis of their suspicion may have changed. The very people who a few years ago were nervous about the spread of Russian communism are today just as nervous about Russian imperialism.

It is almost useless to attempt to argue with these two classes, though their sincerity must be allowed. Far less satisfactory is another point of view, frequently expressed: "The Russians are doing most of the fighting, therefore they are entitled to take what they want." There may be many perfectly valid reasons for the amendment of the Russian frontiers, but this is not one of them. If military prowess were to be the basis of settlement, the Germans would have a very good claim!

The bulk of British opinion is reasonably clear: warm friendship towards the Russian people, intense admiration for their tremendous fight; sympathy with the horrors their country has suffered, and determination to help in reconstruction; a new interest in Russia's internal economy, shared by many people who a few years ago were not very favourably disposed; an urgent desire that Britain and Russia should co-operate closely in the post-war world; but some slight suspicion that Russian views on the rights of small states may not coincide with ours.

British public opinion, apart from the Communists, is sincerely puzzled at Russian opposition to the federal plan—and British opinion on federation is just as important as Russian. So is the opinion of the countries most intimately concerned. Let us face up frankly to the difficulties, as is the invariable Russian habit: we cannot hope to solve problems until we understand quite clearly what they are. We are in conversation with a group of Balkan people, of many nationalities, we will assume; we make notes of the principal points they emphasize, and compile our summary. The views expressed in this are not necessarily mine, of course, but they do reflect ideas widely held in the Balkans. The summary would read:

"We Balkan peoples are fighting for freedom, our objective

for the last hundred years: real freedom, to work out our own way of life. Such freedom can never be attained while we are under foreign influence. Our first aim is to rid ourselves of German domination. But we do *not* wish to exchange this for Russian domination—nor, for that matter, British or American, which might be exerted economically rather than politically. We are eager, desperately anxious, to be on the friendliest terms with these three Great Powers; but we want to live as their friends and neighbours, not as their subjects. You yourself have vigorously denounced the Germans' *Herrenvolk* idea, by which they claim the right to direct the lives of the small nations. We also deny this idea—to the German or any other race.

"An Englishman, Sir William White, once said of the Balkans: 'These newly emancipated races want to breathe free air and not through Russian nostrils.' He wrote that in 1885: it is equally true today—and you can substitute 'German' or any other word for 'Russian.'

"Our outlook on Russia differs considerably from yours. We live next door, and we have developed the objective view which so many of your people lack. We look upon the Russians, not as Bolsheviks, Communists, or State Socialists, but as Russians. The internal economy of Russia was violently changed with the Revolution, but a foreign policy does not necessarily change with a régime. For example, British policy for generations has been dominated by conceptions of empire security and sea power: it could not be otherwise—and the basis does not change if a Socialist Prime Minister replaces a Conservative: he cannot change the essential fact that Britain is the centre of a world-wide empire; and above all that Britain is an island.

"A nation's foreign policy has security as its first essential. As in Britain's case, we do not believe that Russia's foreign policy has altered basically. The method of implementing it, of attaining the results, may be very different, but the objectives remain the same. The geography of Russia dominates her foreign policy, and this did not alter substantially in the transition from Tsars to Soviets.

"At the moment it is idle to pretend that there is confidence in the Balkans—or, for that matter, in Europe. So many treaties have been torn up that the pledged word has little value. The small nations hailed the Atlantic Charter when Churchill and Roosevelt issued it; were delighted when Russia and the rest of the United Nations accepted it as a basis of the New World. We still cling to it as the basis of all our hopes and ambitions; and we cannot conceal our anxiety when it passed unmentioned in the announcement of the Moscow Conference results.

"So we, the small Balkan states, have to consider whether words mean what they appear to mean. We anticipated the outcome of the Moscow Conference with greater eagerness than anyone: we hoped for a firm declaration concerning the rights of the small nations. The only one mentioned was Austria! A similar guarantee of full and real independence to the countries of Central and South-eastern Europe might have produced electrifying results. Our assumptions were obvious. Austria was mentioned because the three powers could easily agree on her case: evidently they could *not* agree about the Balkan countries—including their allies, Yugoslavia and Greece.

"You suggest that we should take comfort from Clause 6 of the Moscow Declaration, whereby the Great Powers agreed, 'That after the termination of hostilities they will not employ their military forces within the territories of other states except for the purpose envisaged in the Declaration, and after joint consultation.' This is excellent, but, since we are talking frankly, we must say that it only relieves part of our anxieties. What meaning is attached to 'the territories of other states'? In driving the Germans back, the Russians will doubtless march into Bessarabia and Eastern Poland *before* the termination of hostilities—the sooner they do so, the better for the world. But do they propose to stay there? In fact, here is the crux of the argument: do the Russians intend to be satisfied with their frontiers of 1938, or to demand those they seized in 1939 and 1940?

"Let us recapitulate: before the outbreak of war, the Russians made a 'Pact of Friendship' with Germany. Nevertheless, they

are no fools and knew quite well that they were intended as the principal European victim of German aggression. So they used the respite to build up their armies, always large and efficient. Further, they sought 'protective frontiers'—they marched into adjacent territory so as to build up a barrier of buffer states between themselves and Germany. They did this by force, at the expense of the small states concerned, but at least we can understand their objective, even if we do not condone the method.

"But let us accept this. Taking Poland as our example, since it was the first case, we will agree that, if the Russians had not marched in, the Germans would have seized the entire country. Here, it can be argued, is a justifiable basis for the Russian move. But is it a justifiable basis for a permanent Russian occupation? Of course, we know quite well that there were large numbers of Ukrainians and Bielo-Russians inside Poland, and smaller numbers of Poles inside Russia. But is that question to be settled by discussion, or by force?

"Then followed the case of the three small Baltic states. First Russia demanded military and naval bases—again this can be justified by the German menace. But then, note what happened. The Russians required further concessions; then they seized all non-co-operators and got rid of them—by exile or otherwise: they held elections in which only one party was allowed to take the field, and on the basis of these 'elections' the subsequent governments voted themselves into the Soviet Union.

"Now, frankly, that is the sort of thing we are afraid of. It could be argued that all the moves were quite constitutional, but everybody knows that they were not. Is Russia determined to retain the Baltic states? Again, there may be perfectly good reasons why these three small states should throw in their lot with Russia, but our argument is that they should do it by their own free choice, if at all, and certainly not by coercion.

"So we return to the Atlantic Charter. Three vital clauses declare that the signatories '(a) seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other, (b) desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned,

(c) respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.' The view of the small Balkan states is quite straightforward: that the Russian territorial acquisitions in 1939 and 1940 were not in accordance with the terms and spirit of these clauses; and that, if those acquisitions become permanent, then the Atlantic Charter has no meaning. This, we emphasize, is quite apart from the validity of any Russian claims, or of the possibility that some small nations may wish to change their form of government. Our objective is that any changes *shall* be the result of freely expressed wishes and not of forceful action, or political intrigue.

"Now you have commented on the short-sighted people in Britain who argue that Russia can pursue her own way without objection simply because she has to date borne the main share of the battle. (Incidentally, we think that they are wrong. Had it not been for the gallant stand of the British in 1940, Hitler might have been master of Europe today. Further, with all her valour Russia might have lacked success had it not been for Allied Lease-Lend supplies—particularly American and Canadian food. We think that you dismiss these people too easily: the view is held in more influential quarters. *The Times*, just *before* the Moscow Conference opened, suggested that in view of her gallantry, Russia ought to be entitled to the 1941 frontiers—that is to say, to the frontiers she seized in 1939 and 1940. You do not wonder that small nations are nervous about *Times* leaders: they still believe that this important journal is a mouthpiece of the government—and they remember the famous occasion in 1938 when *The Times* suggested that Czechoslovakia might be better off without the Sudeten Germans. It was promptly denied that this was the British government's policy, but a few weeks later it became plain that *The Times* was right, and that the denial was wrong. And on the subject of the Russian frontiers there was not even a government denial!

"Further, Clause 6 of the Moscow 'Declaration of the Four



Nations on General Security' merely disclaims the use of armed forces. While we welcome this assurance, it does not cover our fears. You yourself have raised the point earlier in your book: you stated that the Balkans will obviously be in a state of confusion after victory, and at such a time a small body of people, well organized and knowing exactly what they want, can impose their will upon an overwhelming majority, which does not know exactly where it stands. Our fear is, therefore, that the Communist leaders in the Balkan countries will attempt to seize power *before* the termination of hostilities; and that, once installed, they might be difficult to dislodge, especially if they deal with their opponents as we anticipate.

"Now let us define our attitude to Communism. We do not believe that the Balkan peoples lean in that direction: indeed, much of our economic trouble has been caused by the sturdy individualism of our peasants. We are not afraid of Communism, or State Socialism, or whatever the present Soviet system should be called; nor are we afraid of any economic system. Indeed, we envisage some form of socialistic co-operation among our peasants, and of state control and planning of our major industries. But we do not believe that Communism, as such, would suit our mentality and our economic background: and, in any case, if it is to come to the Balkans, we want it to come by the freely expressed wishes of the people, and not to be imposed by force, whether external or internal.

"The Russians maintain in Moscow a Free German Movement: this is a very practical measure of political warfare, for Germany is Russia's enemy and the Movement can be used to lower German morale. But Russia also maintains Free Yugoslav and Free Polish movements, to name but two—and Yugoslavia and Poland are her allies! Evidently you think that our apprehensions are unfounded or exaggerated. But you recall that in 1920, when the Russians advanced to the gates of Warsaw, they brought in the train of their armies a puppet Polish government, ready for installation. Yes, it is true that those were the days of the Communist Crusade. Yet the same thing happened in 1939, in

Finland. Then a Finnish Communist named Kuissinen was nominated as head of the Finnish Soviet, which was declared to have replaced the legitimate Finnish government. You must not wonder that our memory for these things is better than yours: they could not happen to you, but they could happen to us.

"We have agreed that in a moment of confusion a small minority of determined people can seize power. There *will* be intense confusion in the Balkans in the hour of the German defeat. There was confusion even before the war began. Our local Communists, like yours, have taken advantage of the intense admiration of our people for the Russian fight. It may appear to our peasants almost unpatriotic to oppose these friends of Russia. So they may impose their will and seize power. We know what that would mean. They would promptly eliminate all opposition, and establish themselves firmly. No one could claim that this method would be democratic—except, perhaps, our Communists!

"Yet, since you have invited us to speak frankly, we will admit that these points touch only the basis of our anxieties. Britain and the United States welcomed the dissolution of the Comintern as a sign that Russia had discarded all ambitions of political influence in other countries. We were not so assured. Whatever happened to the Comintern (whose secretary was a Balkan), we knew quite well that our own Communists still regarded themselves as Russian agents, even though they were disowned by the Soviet government. We must say this: that many of our people imagine that Russia plans to use countries like Yugoslavia and Bulgaria as Balkan dependencies. Our study of the history of Russian foreign policy supports this view: it is quite obvious that it is against her interests for any other Great Power to be established in the Balkans—and with this we agree whole-heartedly. But we disagree with the method employed to assure this aim—that is, by keeping the Balkans weak and divided, with Russian influence, even if applied indirectly, as the dominating factor.

"Our problem is part of a greater. We do not believe that a small Communist Balkan state could exist by itself: it must

necessarily lean very closely on Russia. Here, indeed, is the crux of our apprehension. The Soviet economic and political systems are such that such a close association inevitably means absorption. Then all our ideas of unity are shattered. There can be no Balkan union if the federation is broken by the presence of, say, a Russian Bulgaria.

"Do not dismiss our fears too lightly. There is nothing new in them. Any objective student would agree that Russian foreign policy has scarcely changed in its direction—though its impelling force may now be benevolence instead of tyranny. You may forget, but we do not, that the old Russian government used to refer to Bulgaria as 'the Transdanubian province of the Tsar.' We should like to know the official Russian view today—but we already know the view of the Bulgarian Communists, and we find a change only in name.

"We cannot say this too often—that we want the Balkans to be dominated by nobody but the Balkan peoples, freely associated. Political subservience to Russia would be almost as objectionable as political subservience to Germany. And, since you have commented strongly and with reason on German economic domination of the Balkans, let us say that we agree with you: the method is detestable, and when the German threat is removed we do not want to be subjected to anybody else's economic domination. This objection applies to Moscow—but it also applies with equal force to the City of London and to Wall Street!

"It may be, too, that the character of Russia is changing—the Soviets never pretended to stand still: progress was their watchword. Recent changes do not seem to be in economic fields. In a war, the power of an army grows. It seems to us that the influence of the Red Army has expanded enormously inside Russia and is now comparable with that of the Communist Party. Was it just a sentimental fad on the part of that very astute realist, Stalin, that he appointed himself a marshal of the Russian army? Thoughts like these confirm our idea that the basis of Russian foreign policy has not changed, for the outlook of army leaders on questions of defence is quite clear and straightforward: po-

litical considerations are of small consequence to them in comparison with secure and defensible frontiers.

"We are somewhat disturbed at the British and American outlook. A number of British newspapers refer to Bessarabia as the province 'seized by Roumania' in 1941. They do not remind their readers that it was seized by Russia in 1940. Again, we agree that the future of Bessarabia is a matter for discussion, but this attitude prejudges the issue. There seems to be an atmosphere of appeasement in Britain—this time directed to Russia instead of Germany. It is significant that only one side of any argument is normally mentioned in many British journals, and that popular opinion seems to be based upon emotions rather than upon facts. Emotion is always a dangerous guide in politics—especially in international affairs.

"We know that America is very friendly to the cause of the small nations. Yet recently there have been some disquieting suggestions. The United States, like Russia, is thinking in terms of protective frontiers—is naturally determined that she shall never again be treacherously attacked. Consequently, she will certainly take some of the Japanese islands in the Pacific: such a move would be approved by everybody except Japan. Some Americans appear uneasy. If they are to take Japanese islands as a protective screen, why should Russia not claim the right to occupy half of Poland for the same purpose?

"The Americans need have no concern, for there is no comparison in the circumstances. They will be taking territory from enemies, not from allies: territories which have been occupied by the Japanese only since 1919, not their historic homelands. Some of the islands are indeed uninhabited; in all cases the local people are primitives, in need of help and guidance, not folk of similar level and culture to be dominated. For that matter, all the United States needs is a square mile of territory to form naval and air bases—the islanders could rule themselves.

"Another point concerns us. There will be liberal Americans, who hold sincerely to the right to freedom of the small nations, but may argue: 'The co-operation of Russia is vital to world

peace. To gain Russian friendship, it is worth while sacrificing little things to secure the big.' Thus they may be tempted to agree to the Russian occupation of Baltic or Balkan territories, holding that the price is cheap if it ensures world peace. Yet surely world peace is as vital to Russia as to the United States, and its price should be shared, not carried by half a dozen small states.

"And, since we have mentioned Eastern Poland, are Russian ambitions there a beginning or an end? Does she plan to use this area as the Germans used Sudetenland—as a first and crippling move towards the complete disruption of Czechoslovakia? Russia declares that she wants to see a strong and friendly Poland as her neighbour: this is an eminently sensible wish. But friendship cannot be imposed. Are the Poles going to have a friendly disposition towards Russia if she seizes half of their territory? And if they are not friendly, what is to happen to the rump of their country, since Russia insists upon an amicable neighbour? (You will recall that Germany insisted on a friendly Czechoslovakia as *her* neighbour!) If Russia wants a friendly Poland, she could have one tomorrow if she re-affirmed that the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 and all its consequences are dead, and that any modifications of the Russian-Polish frontier will be made by mutual agreement. That would be our line of thought if we were Poles.

"The comparative position of Russia and Poland might be compared with that of the United States and Mexico. In the days when the tsars oppressed Poland, the United States oppressed Mexico—not by military force, but by what was called 'dollar diplomacy,' a form of economic imperialism. This plan has been abandoned. In its place was substituted the 'good neighbour' policy. Not only was it more moral, but it paid. All the countries of Eastern Europe need a 'good neighbour' policy: they can scarcely exist without it. A good neighbour is the best possible defence. The English Gladstone once said: 'There is no barrier like the breasts of free men.'

"You will have noted that our interpretation of events often differs from yours. We noted, for example, that in Britain and America a warm welcome was given to the re-establishment of

relations between the Soviet government and the Orthodox Church. Our reactions were not quite the same. You have remarked, quite correctly, on the influence of religion in the Balkans: it was one of the bonds between our peoples and the Russians. When the Soviets went atheist and persecuted the Orthodox Church, then that bond was snapped. Is the new policy of religion designed to re-establish the old bond? On very many grounds we welcome the move, but there is generally an astute political significance behind any Russian action.

"In recent years, too, the Pan-Slav banner has been raised again. The idea arouses sentimental enthusiasm in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. But emotion is a dangerous basis for international relations, as we have said. Already the two Balkan Slav countries have the closest cultural affinities with the Russians, but this intimate association could easily be used as a means towards political assimilation. You must admit that the method has not been unknown in the past. The first Pan-Slav conference, held at Moscow in 1867 (disguised as a scientific conference!) established secret societies in Serbia and Bulgaria to work in the Balkans for Russian interests. If only by virtue of numbers, Pan-Slavism means Russian domination.

"Your people are puzzled, you confess, at Russian opposition to our aspirations towards Balkan unity. It is not new, of course. When Greece and Yugoslavia in 1941 decided to lay a practical foundation for union, Russia objected. Yet the move was most logical: here were two peoples who had lived as friends and neighbours under the same Balkan roof for a thousand years—what more natural than that their common misfortunes should persuade them that unity is strength? The only pity was that the action was not taken years ago. Even before that, you will recall, Poland and Czechoslovakia had decided upon mutual federation. Today all negotiations are halted, because of Russian pressure on Czechoslovakia, where her influence is very strong. You are puzzled, but if the apprehensions of some of our people are well founded, then the case is perfectly clear—that Russian policy is unchanged, and that a weak and divided Balkan peninsula is her

only contemplated alternative to Russian domination of the Balkans.

"Now let us turn to Clause 4 of the Moscow Declaration, where the four powers state that 'they recognize the necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date a general international organization, based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all peace-loving states and open to membership by all such states, large or small, for the maintenance of international peace and security.'

"This is very welcome. It envisages a kind of League of Nations. Again, do not blame us too hardly because our apprehensions are not immediately dispelled. The first League of Nations failed—not by the fault of the small powers, but of the great. Japan, Italy, Germany—and Britain and France—were responsible for its failure. A new organization could only succeed on a basis of confidence, and at the moment this scarcely exists.

"We do not undervalue this Declaration. We believe that the four powers, if they work in close collaboration, can by themselves guarantee the peace of the world. Nowhere would this boon be esteemed more highly than in the Balkans. Yet our federal ideas are not based exclusively on security, but upon economic, cultural, and political interests. Let us say this quite plainly: that if the Great Powers, collectively or individually, deliberately block our move towards Balkan unity, then all our worst fears and suspicions will be confirmed, and any basis for confidence will disappear.

"On the other hand, we draw confidence from another aspect of the Declaration. At one time *The Times* published one of its famous leaders advocating the division of Europe into two 'spheres of influence'—British up to the Rhine, Russian to the Oder. (Apparently Germany was to be in charge of all interests in between!) We know these 'spheres of influence' from past history. They involve political subserviency on the part of the small states. Holland and Belgium wish to collaborate most closely with Britain, but they do not want to be dominated by Britain. Our

attitude to Russia is precisely the same. We gather from the idea of the new 'international authority' that 'spheres of influence' are dead—to our great relief.

"In our turn, we are puzzled at Russian apprehensions that a Balkan or Middle Zone Federation should be a *cordon sanitaire* sealing Russia off from Europe—a kind of capitalist Maginot Line. The Federation would be almost exclusively composed of peasant states. So far from being a menace, it would be a protection to Russia against Germany—a mere glance at a map shows that strategically it would be helpless against Russia. A Federation could never make war except on the *united* opinion of all its members—and Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria could never be persuaded to oppose Russia. On the contrary, the proposed Federation would need to work in the closest co-operation with its powerful eastern neighbour, to the advantage of both. We can say this—that in view of prevailing ideas in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria it would be quite impossible even to *form* a federation directed against Russia, much less for it to survive.

"We are disappointed to note that ideas on the rights of the small nations appear to be retrogressive in some British and American circles. The little states may fear the Great Powers, but the reverse can never apply. We badly need a New Deal for the minor states of Europe. It seems that our fault is that we are too small: thereby we have inspired acquisitive ideas in more powerful neighbours. But is that our fault, or that of our neighbours? And what are we to think if we are not allowed to combine for mutual protection and help?

"May we suggest that your viewpoint needs extension? Britain rightly insists on the integrity and independence of Belgium and Holland—which are not as large as many of the small Balkan states. Surely these also are entitled to the same elementary rights?

"For far too long the Balkan states have been used as the pawns of the Great Powers. A higher morality is overdue. We want to work out our own way of life: above all, we want our freedom—which should mean more than the absence of enemy soldiers from



our soil. We are very disturbed at the manner in which political questions have been infused even into the fight for freedom. Are the Balkans to be used as the scene of a second Spanish Civil War? Shall we soon be reading about intervention and non-intervention? You know quite well that the Spanish Civil War was largely due to foreign prompting, and that outside interference transformed it into a long and bitter struggle. That is *not* our ambition for the Balkans.

"The Germans have been flaunting one suggestion which some of our people believed because other factors appeared to support it. The story is that in the autumn of 1943 Britain and the United States were all prepared for the invasion of the Balkans, but that the plan was postponed at Russian request—because Russia wanted to get into the Balkans first! We should like to hear this vigorously denied. It does not fit in with often expressed Russian ideas about the Allies drawing off German divisions, but it does fit in with some of our older apprehensions.

"Now, because we have not expressed ourselves in terms of 100 per cent adulation of Russia, there will be an outcry that we are anti-Russian. That is absolutely untrue. Nowhere in the world is there a warmer affection for Russia than in the Balkans. You have correctly remarked that Balkan reactionaries dubbed every progressive man as a Communist. Today, it seems to us, some of your people dub as a reactionary every Balkan who is not a Communist!

"We hope that we have made our position perfectly clear; anything less than absolute frankness would be useless. Germany is our outstanding danger—not Hitlerite or Nazi Germany, but Germany. Our first objective is to drive the Germans out of the Balkans; our second, to keep them out. Then we want to develop our lands, in close co-operation with the United Nations, but we want freedom above all things. We have noted with great satisfaction Stalin's twenty-sixth-anniversary-of-the-Revolution broadcast. In it he said: 'The peoples of . . . Yugoslavia and Greece must again become free and independent. . . . The liberated peoples shall be given complete freedom to decide for themselves the structure of their own states.'

"This is excellent. Yet how are we to reconcile it with Russian objections to local federations? If Greece and Yugoslavia are not allowed of their own will to move the control of their common interests much nearer, how can it be claimed that they are free and independent? If they are to decide the structure of their own states, why is a small faction, with outside backing, attempting to impose Soviet Republics on areas which it controls? Do you wonder that we claim that words have almost lost their meaning—that we need deeds to convince us that our friends are as sincere as their declarations?

"Further, Stalin talks of the liberation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Are these also to be free and independent, deciding the structure of their own states? It reads as if they are to be incorporated as Soviet Republics whether they like it or not.

"The Teheran Conference filled us with hope. We were thrilled at its dramatic communiqué, promising defeat and retribution to Germany; we welcomed thankfully the Allied recognition of a determination to banish the scourge and terror of war for many generations: our hearts beat high when the three great leaders sought the co-operation and active participation of all nations, great and small, in the elimination of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance. And yet, do you mind if we say this—that we found our greatest comfort in the special declaration to Iran, or Persia. Not merely the guarantee of its post-war independence, but the final phrase: 'They count upon peace-loving nations in the establishment of international peace, security, and prosperity after the war in accordance with the principles of the Atlantic Charter, to which all four governments have subscribed.' That last phrase means a lot to us: as we have said, we had begun to think that the Atlantic Charter had been forgotten or allowed to lapse. To us it is a precious statement of principles.

"We welcome the Moscow and Teheran declarations—as we welcomed the Atlantic Charter. It is now the duty of the four powers to convince us that their noble sentiments mean something: they can do this only by deeds, not words. Surely questions of security are not involved—the way to security lies over the body of Germany, not by the dismemberment of the Balkans!

We and you are fighting for freedom—for all of us, small and large. After victory, we all want security. If, when the Axis menace is removed, all we can think about is protective frontiers, then we shall have lost the war we thought we were fighting."

## VII

I repeat that the opinions recorded in the previous section are not necessarily mine, but that they are representative of those I have heard expressed in Balkan circles, before and since the war began. There are, of course, Balkan people who hold more intense views, on both extremes: I have tried to summarize the ideas of peasants, social democrats, and liberals, fairly typical of the Balkan populations.

Some of the points they raise may seem to us to be baseless; some of the apprehensions appear exaggerated, others certainly demand an answer. We can sympathize without reservation with their desire for real freedom, without any form of external domination, direct or indirect. We will agree that financial domination can be just as detestable in its effects as military occupation.

I think that the Balkan peoples perhaps expected too much from the Moscow Conference. Its results were very important, and will have wide repercussions. Further, it is very doubtful whether everything that happened was recorded for public comment! Obviously, many subjects could best be discussed and recorded privately. It can reasonably be assumed that the problems of the Balkans did not escape attention, and it will be very surprising if practical results do not mature even before this book appears.

First in importance at the Conference was the declaration of Allied solidarity in such firm terms that their basis could not be doubted, even by Germany. Important consequences may follow. Some of the subject states, like Finland and Roumania, had hoped for a British-American victory, but for a Russian defeat—or, at least, stalemate in the East, so that Russia would be unable to

enforce territorial claims. Now it was made clear that the United Nations stood solidly together: the events of the last war were not to be repeated. If the three powers at Moscow agreed on reasonable terms, there is little doubt that Finland and Roumania (and possibly Hungary and Bulgaria) could be eliminated from the war. Their argument is now that they ought to be able to expect more reasonable terms from a Three Power Conference than from Russia alone—especially from a victorious Russia. We ought to encourage any move—our prime objective is the defeat of Germany, not the punishment of Finland. The effects, following the collapse of Italy, might be staggering—even decisive. Not even the ingenuity of Dr. Goebbels could cover up a situation in which Germany was deserted by all her allies, who had lost faith in her victory. The moral shock in Germany would be profound: and the military strain, involving the loss of a million subordinate troops and their replacement by Germans, and the policing of more hostile countries, might become unbearable.

It may be true that the absence of mention of countries other than Austria and Italy in the Moscow report meant that the three powers had not reached agreement on the Balkan and Central European states. But the Moscow Conference was only a beginning. Its most vital purpose was to demonstrate that Germany's last weapon, the division of the Allies, had failed. Bessarabia is important, but Allied solidarity is even more important, especially at a critical moment of the war. Therefore contentious problems were postponed for fuller discussion and equitable solution. In the meantime, a European Advisory Commission was set up in London to examine and report rapidly on all such points when or before they became urgent. It is certain that none of the difficulties were overlooked, but the first objective was a declaration of principles. This went even further than most optimists had considered possible, yet it offered no suggestion of finality.

For that matter, the guarantee of a free Austria ought to help to dispel some Balkan apprehensions. It is quite certain that Austria cannot exist by herself—she must be federated in some form with her neighbours. Thus it would seem that the federal

schemes advocated by Mr. Churchill are still alive; at least they have not been condemned.

When this point of view was suggested in the London press, its Moscow counterpart showed an expert diplomatic touch. *Izvestia*, after denying that the mention of Austria involved a Central European Federation, went on to argue that Russia's anxiety was to prevent a "premature and possibly artificial linking of small countries.

"Such conjunction, involving abandonment of some degree of sovereignty, could only be carried out by the carefully considered and freely expressed will of the peoples concerned.

"Only after the situation on the cessation of hostilities has somewhat eased, and the small countries have become more settled and sure in their independence, can any discussion of the question of federation be more fruitful.

"The Soviet point of view does not exclude the Soviet Union's readiness at an appropriate time to study the question in the light of the post-war collaboration with other United Nations, and taking into consideration the situation in the post-war period.

"It would be unjust if the small countries who became vassals of Germany should now be, as members of any Federation, placed in as equal and favourable conditions as the small countries who have been victims of invasion and occupation on the part of the enemy, and in particular of these very nations.

"Furthermore, and this should be particularly stressed, the Soviet point of view definitely rejects any efforts to resurrect the policy of any *cordon sanitaire* against Russia in any form whatever."

Most of this is eminently reasonable—and certainly represents an advance on previous Russian ideas; it shows that the Russians are *not* going to take up the standpoint: "Here are our terms—no others will be considered." On the other hand, there is every evidence here of a spirit of consideration of other people's ideas. We have already insisted that it would be impossible to impose a federation upon unwilling states or peoples; that a federation merely accepted as an outcome of the war would not last very

long, but, to be successful, must be founded upon the genuine desire and common interests of the peoples concerned: that some time may elapse before the necessary conditions of confidence are created—the Russian idea obviously reflects that of Yugoslavia and Greece: these countries, as we have seen, are not at the moment in the mood to welcome Bulgaria into close federation.

While agreeing that it is quite impossible to make firm commitments at this stage, we would query the contention of *Izvestia* that it is too early to discuss and study the questions involved in federation. On the contrary: the wider the discussion, the more generally it is realized that federation is only a stage in planning, and is not a panacea for all evils; that it can confer considerable benefits, but that it *does* involve the surrender of some portion of national sovereignty which can never be recalled—the more serious thought given to these considerations, the firmer the basis of the advance.

On the contrary, no one will quarrel with the Russian insistence that no federation should be used or planned as a *cordon sanitaire*. Since Czechoslovakia holds a vital position, as the only industrial state, in any Central European Federation, the signature of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Twenty Year Pact is of more than usual interest. The Pact, based on the Anglo-Russian Treaty, is primarily a defensive alliance against Germany and her allies, but it includes a clause providing that other nations, like Poland, who are neighbours of Russia or Czechoslovakia, may enter it on the same terms. Here again is a sign of a significant advance of opinion. We have already suggested that the Anglo-Soviet Treaty might be adopted as the basis of a tripartite pact which would include a Central European or Balkan Federation. It also disposes of the *cordon sanitaire* idea. No Central European Federation could exist without Czechoslovakia, and no Federation which included Czechoslovakia could ever be directed against Russia. By the time this book appears, if common sense continues to prevail, this very sensible beginning may already have led to wider decisions.

Further, it may be that our Balkan friends are too nervous

about the activities of their own Communists, and exaggerate the extent to which they are able to manœuvre the unbounded admiration for the Russian fight into political channels. In British trade union circles there is also unbounded admiration for the Russian fight; but most British trade unionists are not Communists, nor are they likely to be—they are especially frank and free in their comments on British Communists. Nevertheless, we can appreciate Balkan anxiety when so large a proportion of the British press gives a misleading idea of Communist activity in the Balkans. The collapse of Italy revealed what we had long suspected. Freedom, by the definition of some of our politicians, means the imposition of their own political creed upon a liberated country. Such a travesty must be firmly resisted: all the pledges of the United Nations rightly give first place to the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned. Far too often today men profess to represent their country when they represent only a political party: or, maybe, only themselves. We may have to remind some of our Balkan friends that, while we agree that it would be quite wrong if a handful of partisans imposed Communism upon an unwilling country, it would be equally wrong if a group of reactionaries imposed their will upon a progressive people. In the first months after reoccupation and victory, the principle of all governments should be that of trusteeship: not until elementary conditions of life are normal should people be asked to make a solemn decision on their own fate. Any such decision made in the heated aftermath of a cruel war is almost certain to be wrong.

Certainly the Balkan states have a case when they claim that Russia's "protective frontiers" are not a matter for unilateral action. Until the situation is clarified, there are many possibilities. The Russian demand for security can be agreed without discussion. One method of securing it would be to implement firmly previous decisions about the complete and continuous disarmament of Germany—the only European power which could ever seriously threaten Russia. There may be a further idea behind Russian moves. Until recent years, with no background of con-

fidence, they had small reason to trust British and American ideas of security. It was a Russian Foreign Minister who proclaimed the sane and common-sense idea that "peace is indivisible," but we did not accept the principle. It may be that the Russians have demanded strategic frontiers in order to startle Britain and America into the only real alternative—a system of collective security which is active and practical.

Too much influence can be attributed to the Soviet press. Although officially controlled, it is used as a weapon quite frankly, at home and abroad. Only the week before the German attack on Russia, *Pravda* declared that the rumours that an attack was pending were only capitalist-imperialist schemings to upset Russian relations with Germany. In view of the efficient military preparations, it can safely be assumed that this was *not* the view of the Soviet government. Thus, when *Pravda* declares that Russian frontiers are of no concern to Britain, the United States and their allies, it does not follow that this opinion is sacred. A military weapon which turns out to be useless is promptly discarded; so is a political weapon: this is no more than common sense. It is easier in Russia to alter the tone of press comment than it is in Britain or the United States.

Similarly, the "Free" movements sponsored by Russia can be overestimated. They are part of the machinery of political warfare—a science which the Russians understand very well. But, if they are not successful in their purpose, they can be dropped—as Kuissinen and his "Finnish Soviet" were dropped when their usefulness was exhausted.

The Balkan argument, in fact, throughout assumes a degree of British and American subservience to Russia. This is based partly upon our comparative lack of interest in the past, but also, I suggest, on German insinuations, which have been poured into the Balkans almost without opposition for two years. Yet the idea is fundamentally absurd. In particular, any American government which was subservient to Russia would be discredited in an hour; close collaboration is quite another thing.

The Moscow Conference, so far from being dominated exclu-



sively by the Russian viewpoint, was a frank exchange of opinion, which revealed a wide measure of agreement—when the very different outlooks of the three countries are considered, a remarkably wide measure. It showed that Russia is prepared for full collaboration with Britain and the United States; in view of the realist Russian outlook, this is very sane. If Russia had insisted on her own way in every case, without consideration of the arguments of Britain and the United States, and the smaller allies, then inevitably she must have been left to follow her own road, with many dangers of serious clashes. Instead, she chose cordial co-operation. If goodwill continues to prevail, there is every prospect of expanding agreement.

The Balkan fear of a Communist coup can also be exaggerated. If the Germans collapsed suddenly, then it could easily happen. But if the Balkans are reconquered by Allied armies, as appears likely, then the situation is quite different. Probably a country would be liberated district by district. If the freed people could agree, then they could immediately set up their own provincial governments; if not, until such time as free elections could be held, presumably the districts would be under the general control of the Mediterranean Commission, consisting in the main of representatives of Britain, the United States, and Russia. It is their business, and that of the London Advisory Commission planned by the Moscow Conference, to implement the guarantees of the Moscow Declaration, which are quite explicit.

We can share the concern at the virtual state of civil war which covers areas of Yugoslavia and Greece today, and which may extend to Bulgaria and Roumania as the German grip relaxes. At all costs we must avoid a repetition of the Spanish tragedy. Here again is a difficult task for the Mediterranean or London Commission. It could proclaim that no political advantage seized by force would be maintained; emphasize that our sole object is to free the Balkan countries from German domination and then to allow their peoples to choose freely the form of government they prefer. Even more will be needed—a “gentlemen’s agreement,” if you will—that no indirect influence shall be applied.

Even now it is not too early to take stern action. If “Tito” and

Mihailovitch cannot agree, let each be put in charge of an area of the Yugoslav battlefield and both be placed under a direct military commander appointed by the Allied Mediterranean Commission. Russian influence on one faction, and ours on the other, should be able to ensure that at least the Yugoslav guerrillas concentrate the battle against the common enemy and not dissipate their strength in internecine feuds. Apart from the military tragedy of dissension, the moral effects are very great—abroad as well as at home. Already the Balkan peoples have lost a share of the world's sympathy because some of them have placed personal or political advantages before the freedom of their countries.

It may be that they are too nervous about Russian policy. A dozen times the Allied leaders have promised the restoration of freedom to Yugoslavia, Greece, and Albania: Bulgaria and Roumania, at the moment, are ranged among our opponents. It is true that Balkan anxieties are not of territorial encroachments by military conquest, but by political action, apparently internal. At the earliest possible date a firm declaration of intentions is certainly advisable.

Russian territorial ambitions, indeed, have been grotesquely exaggerated by the German propaganda service. It is quite obvious that Russia needs a good neighbour at Constantinople; she can view with equanimity the Bosphorus and Dardanelles controlled by Turkey, or by a Balkan Federation, but *not* controlled by Germany. Yet her vista has become very much wider since the days of Peter the Great—Russia's geographical or geopolitical outlook *has* changed, in spite of our Balkan friends' argument. Were she thinking along old lines of power politics, Constantinople would be no great prize—with Britain controlling both exits to the Mediterranean; Russian gaze would more likely be directed towards ports on the Persian Gulf. Hitherto Russian economy has been directed emphatically to internal considerations rather than extensive foreign trade; in any case, all her aspirations can be met without prejudice to the rights of neighbouring peoples: indeed, to their profit.

There is one implication which we should not evade. We are

agreed that Anglo-American-Russian collaboration is vital to the peace of the world. It can only be assured on a basis of mutual confidence and understanding. If each of the three powers had approached the Moscow Conference in the mood, "These are our terms: we will consider no others," then the Conference would have been an abject failure. There are such differences in our viewpoints that compromise is essential: none of us is especially good at seeing the other's point of view. It is certain that Britain and America will have to make some move towards the Russian outlook; but any sacrifices should be made at our own expense, not at those of the small nations which have already suffered so much. Similarly, the Russians cannot expect us to agree with all their demands; they are realists, and know that though their collaboration is vital to us ours is equally vital to them. To no country in the world would a long period of peace be such a boon as to Russia. Her sufferings have been grievous, and, great as are her resources, she will need aid in reconstruction. On a basis of confidence, this can be freely given.

We should be able to agree with the Balkan argument that any proposed federation is not some capitalist grouping directed against Russia: the inclusion of Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria alone ensures this. The Middle Zone and Balkan countries would gain enormously by unity: this desire has been prompted by their common interests and grievous sufferings, and *not* by wicked financiers in London and New York. Indeed, it is probable that financiers would prefer a number of weak states to a federation: commercial businessmen, on the other hand, appreciate the security which union would give.

If the frontier questions were amicably settled, there would be no barrier to the closest co-operation with Russia. Indeed, there is no reason why the Anglo-Soviet Treaty should not be extended so as to include Central European and Balkan federations. Our main objectives are identical.

Yet, when we have countered many of the Balkan fears and suspicions, there remain others still to be alienated. It is unfortunately true that confidence in the pledged word scarcely exists: we

have to demonstrate that we propose to translate the high sentiments of the Moscow Declaration and the Atlantic Charter into deeds. We ought to take most urgent steps to reach agreement on all outstanding problems. Tomorrow may be too late: it is easy to attain unity when you are fighting for life in a position of great danger; disagreement comes when the situation is easier. How many of the great alliances of history have survived defeats, only to crumble in the moment of victory? History only repeats itself when men so direct it. We have a great opportunity.

## VIII

It must not be assumed that any idea of federation solves automatically the awkward problems I have mentioned earlier in this book. Frontier problems are eased when discussed between friends, but friendship alone does not solve them—and there will be no permanent peace in the Balkans until they *are* solved. Sir John Marriott wrote, almost prophetically, in 1917: "No confederation, however loose in structure, could be expected to endure for six months, unless a fairly satisfactory settlement of outstanding difficulties (i.e. territorial readjustments) can be previously effected. And this settlement must come from within."

In agreeing the necessity for Balkan Federation, we must not overlook the intense nationalism of the region: a blow to national pride can be just as disastrous to peace as a blow to the national pocket. Where the clash is real, I have suggested a drastic solution—adjustments of frontiers accompanied by transfer of populations. I do not think that any alternative will ever yield results—it is quite useless—at the moment—to depend upon toleration, a word as yet unfamiliar in Balkan practice. There is no need for harsh action: our transfers, under generous conditions, will seem very mild after the sufferings of the Balkan peoples during the war. No expenditure of thought and money would yield such long-term dividends of peace and happiness. The Balkans teem with difficulties, but awkward problems are not solved by pretending that they do not exist.

I am no economist, so have had to content myself with outlining the economic problems of the Balkans rather than attempting to solve them. They are desperately urgent. Nor can they ever be solved within the Balkans. A Lend-Lease policy applied to agricultural and industrial machinery, backed by generous long-term loans, would have important results. Industrialization, if only rural, appears to be a vital factor in Balkan recovery.

It will need careful planning. Hitherto investors have financed the industries which would yield them the biggest profits, not those of the greatest benefit to the countries concerned. This is quite understandable, but the attitude will not meet Balkan needs. The time has gone when thousands of Yugoslav workmen should be thrown out of work because of the decision of a foreign board of directors to close down a factory which was not showing sufficient profit. (This, of course, applies equally nearer home.)

Emigration is no more than a palliative, but would ease desperate years. The whole basis needs changing. In past generations the new countries drew millions of immigrants from Europe: that is to say, they gained from Europe valuable assets, for men are surely as valuable as machines. The grown man of twenty-five has cost his country thousands of dollars in upkeep, education, and training: to date the recipient states have got him for nothing. If Canada takes a few thousand able-bodied and hard-working Bulgars, it could be argued as only reasonable that she should pay over to Bulgaria what these men have cost to that country. In a hundred years the United States alone received thirty-seven million immigrants from Europe: the capital value of these people cancels the War Debts and Lease-Lend bills.

The Balkan states will need more than industrial machines: there is an urgent demand for the temporary or permanent loan of skilled men. Britain has an ample supply, and her skilled workmen are the admiration of the world. On the other hand, if the Central European Federation matures, Czechoslovakia also has a large reservoir of skilled men.

Agriculturally, we shall need to supply not only machinery, but ideas. The peasant is often his own worst enemy: his con-

servatism is proverbial. Far-reaching results might follow the loan of agricultural experts from Britain, Russia, the United States, and Canada. The scope of Balkan farming needs urgent widening.

Its finance also needs immediate and generous attention. It is not merely a question of planning the future, but of wiping out the arrears of the past. Yet a greater problem is that of raising the Balkan standard of living. If we have economists who can work out an equitable method of accomplishing this, then we are well on our way to the New Balkans, if not to the New World. Poverty is man's greatest enemy: it breeds fear and disease; it is not a menace merely to the health and wealth of nations, but to the cause of peace: it saps the mind as well as the body. When we talk about "winning the peace," we are not only concerned with the disarmament of Germany: we have to destroy poverty as well as Fascism. The solution of the problem of peasant Europe would be an advance of decisive and inestimable value.

Britain, the United States, and Russia, acting with generosity, can lay the foundations for Balkan peace and prosperity. Yet the edifice must be built by the Balkan peoples themselves. Their first insistence should be on real democracy, a general clean-up of political life and government. (We might loan them a few incorruptible administrators, as we loaned police officers to Albania.) The overlying policy should be that the welfare of the people is paramount. A flexible federation in the first instance might be preferable to some hard-cast scheme which would crack at the first jolt.

Certainly we should encourage all practical ideas of Balkan unity. It is likely to be difficult of achievement, even within the Balkans, and devoid of outside interference. Yet without it Balkan peace and prosperity are a hazy mirage. The Balkans would exist from crisis to crisis, as in the past. Unity would breed confidence, which is the only real basis of progress.

Defensive pacts are not enough. The Little Entente, directed against Hungary, recognized that conflict was inevitable and merely strove to postpone it. The Balkan Pact, directed to a

smaller extent against Bulgaria, made Balkan union impossible. The outstanding grievances must be removed *first*; then friendship and federation will follow.

Our part is clear: generosity, interest, and justice. History is likely to judge us by our treatment of the small countries. We fight for our own freedom: we cannot reasonably deny it to others.

## IX

It may seem that in general my survey of the Balkan situation is somewhat gloomy. But Napoleon numbered among his ideas a very sane comment: "The situation is never as good and never as bad as it appears to be."

Assuredly we have to dismiss all easy and optimistic assurances that in the moment of victory all Balkan differences and problems will disappear. The exact opposite is nearer to the truth, so far as can reasonably be foreseen.

A spread of ideas is an urgent necessity. Today, the Balkan peoples know quite a lot about German and Russian propaganda, but singularly little about British and American ideals of democracy—because we have never taken the trouble to spread them. The Russians believe in their political system, so preach it abroad: we must have the same faith. Bring the Balkan peoples to our shores; send our own people to the Balkan countries; arrange a free and continuous exchange of cultural ideas—like that which, at long last, is now becoming current between Britain and Russia. Then the Balkan peoples can decide which way of life they favour. Their decision should be freely expressed, and not imposed by force.

The Balkan future depends primarily upon two considerations. The first is obvious—complete victory over Germany, and a fervent determination that this kind of thing shall never happen again. We used to sneer at the old Victorian "Nonconformist Conscience," yet its revival today would be welcome. In its place we substituted a Conformist Conscience which was no con-

science at all; we called it appeasement. Wickedness cannot be appeased: we cannot compromise with evil, whatever its source. In a compromise, evil always wins.

The second consideration is a continuance and expansion of British, American, and Russian agreement and collaboration. If we do not agree, then the unhappy parallel of the Spanish Civil War would not be strained. M. Grol, once Yugoslav Foreign Minister wrote: "When at last these three powers show agreement, miracles will be done. Little saints never work miracles: only the big."

Our most urgent need is for a statement of practical principles based upon the Atlantic Charter and the Moscow Declaration—something akin to the Fourteen Points of the last war. These caused demoralization in Germany, because they were recognized by ordinary men as just; and they created a religious fervour in the breasts of ordinary men throughout Europe. Surely the combined genius of Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin is equal to the task of formulating a practical basis for the New Europe? We can reasonably hope that the Teheran Conference is a beginning, not an end.

As a basis for discussion, I worked out and published some months ago the basic plan of a Balkan Charter. It is not exactly original—most of its ideas and phrases have been borrowed from Wilson's Fourteen Points, the Atlantic Charter, the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, and the Moscow Declaration. Yet, even with its limited circulation and without any official backing, it aroused the widest interest—almost excitement—in Balkan circles. It is certain that if Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin *could* agree and proclaim principles of this kind, then the results might be electrifying. Doubt and distrust are the enemies of the Balkans today: a declaration like this would sweep them aside. Men would regain confidence and would fight vigorously for the human and practical ideas represented. I repeat that I offer the Balkan Charter in an immature form, only as a basis of discussion, but I know already the invigorating effects it would have upon men to whom hope seems no more than an eternal mirage.



## THE BALKAN CHARTER

1. The Balkan peninsula shall be considered as sacred to the interests of the Balkan peoples and shall not be subjected to any form of political, military, or economic domination by foreign powers.

2. No territorial changes shall be made which do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the majority of the people concerned. Any minority already existent or created by new circumstances shall be given the option of being transferred to the territory of its parent race, under generous conditions, or of accepting in finality the rule of the state into which the region has voted itself by plebiscite held under fair and internationally controlled conditions. Territorial changes made by force during the war will not be recognized.

3. The Balkan peoples are guaranteed the right to choose by free expression of their wishes the form of government under which they will live.

4. The Balkan peoples shall be given access on equal terms to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic stability. They shall be assured a full share of international economic collaboration, with the object of securing for all improved labour standards, economic advancement, and social security.

5. Recognizing their own share of the general blame for the inadequate development of Balkan economy and the low standards of Balkan living, the Great Powers—in particular Britain, the United States, and the U.S.S.R.—pledge themselves to make generous efforts to raise Balkan standards of life.

6. In particular, especial attention shall be given to peasant problems of production and marketing. Peasants shall be confirmed in the ownership of their land, any large estates still remaining in the hands of individuals or corporations should be divided between landless peasants, under fair conditions; co-operative enterprises shall be encouraged, adequate financial resources guaranteed, and satisfactory marketing conditions provided.

7. Rural industries shall be stimulated in order to cope with the problems of the landless peasants. The Great Powers will lend assistance in the provision of machinery and technical advice, on Lease-Lend or long-term-loan conditions. Any such assistance will not be

used to advance political influence, but will be given in a spirit of intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

8. A new programme of educational advance in Balkan countries shall be formulated immediately. Cultural exchanges with other countries shall be encouraged.

9. The Balkan states guarantee their aid to the Great Powers in their all-important objective of maintaining world peace. In particular, they abandon the use of force in all questions between themselves; such as cannot be mutually settled will be referred to an arbitration council representing all the Balkan nations, or an arbitration council internationally constituted.

10. Within, and as a basic formation of the essential international authority anticipate by the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, the Atlantic Charter, and the Moscow Declaration, the Balkan peoples shall be encouraged to unite their destinies in federal form, along lines to be mutually decided. Any resultant Balkan Federation would be admitted to the terms of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, which would thus become a tripartite pact and probably the basis of a still wider agreement.

11. The Balkan peoples shall be assured of the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the determination of their own united political development and policy. They will plan boldly and constructively, but until the prosperity of the Balkans is assured they will take urgent steps to ensure that the burden of taxation on the peasant is lightened and is never unfair; they will also employ urgent measures to ensure that political practice shall be democratic and that corruption shall be regarded and treated as a major crime.

12. The Great Powers will co-operate generously in the rehabilitation of the Balkan countries after the appalling devastation resultant from the war. Nor will a policy of revenge be applied to Balkan peoples who were forced to accept German domination by events or governments over which they had little or no control. The treatment accorded to all the Balkan states in the months to come by the countries fortunate enough to escape the ravages of war will be the acid test of their goodwill.

13. The political independence and territorial integrity of the individual Balkan states and, later, of any Balkan or larger Federation which may be formed, shall receive international guarantees.

14. The Balkan peoples, who have suffered so much from war, will

co-operate loyally with all men of goodwill for the establishment of a wider and permanent system of collective security designed to effect a durable and equitable peace, which would enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance, which would lighten the crushing burden of armaments, which would afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, which would guarantee to the ordinary man his elementary rights of free speech, freedom of worship, of justice, representation, and social security, of the recognition of human dignity and equal opportunity, and which would afford assurances that all men in all lands might live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.

The problem needs to be attacked very early. Victory is a rapidly wasting asset. We are a strangely assorted group of allies, brought together almost by accident. When the common menace is destroyed, the bond which united us may relax its grip. Our obvious policy is to strengthen its chains now, forging them with confidence and frankness, so that they will survive the inevitable strains of the post-war years.

## POST SCRIPTUM

SINCE THIS BOOK was written, the war climax of the Balkans has approached at great speed. The background of my argument is not affected—the Balkan problems still await solution; but a brief résumé of the dramatic events of the late summer of 1944 will be useful.

### ROUMANIA

So far back as April, 1944, Dr. Maniu (the leader of the Roumanian Peasant Party) had reached agreement with General Maitland Wilson, Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean. It was revealed that Maniu had been in correspondence with the Allies for four years—I have emphasised that we have plenty of friends in Roumania. Maniu agreed that he would endeavour to persuade Marshal Antonescu to ask for an armistice; failing this, the democratic parties would overthrow the satellite government by a *coup d'état*.

With the Germans in occupation of the country, Antonescu refused to move, even when he knew that the war was lost. By August, 1944, the Russians were on Roumanian soil, were mounting a serious offensive, and were likely to inflict another severe defeat on the Germans. Maniu and his collaborators decided correctly that action could be postponed no longer.

On August 23rd the young King Michael made a dramatic broadcast to the nation. Not only did Roumania withdraw from the German side—her men were now to fight with the Allies against the Germans. The Russian promise of the return of Transylvania was emphasised, and a new government was formed under General Senatescu, with Maniu and Bratianu as its principal members.

The Germans made the expected response. They branded the Roumanian leaders as "traitors," and endeavoured to set up a

"National Roumanian Government" under Horea Sima, the Iron Guard leader. They were far too late; their position in Roumania was already hopeless.

At the time of the Roumanian turn-around, the Germans had nine army divisions in the country, intermingled with twenty Roumanian divisions. Suddenly the Roumanians changed sides! The German confusion can be imagined. Further, the Roumanians fought against their late masters with some enthusiasm, and within a week captured 55,000 prisoners. They certainly made a good start in "working back their passage."

A fortnight later the peace terms were announced. Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were lost to Russia, but Transylvania was to be regained. Russia demanded an indemnity of \$300,000,000. Apart from the necessities of war, the Roumanians were to govern themselves.

As between victors and vanquished, the terms were reasonable, even generous. Whether they accorded with the spirit or letter of the Atlantic Charter will probably be debated for some time. A backward glance at the sections covering Bessarabia and Transylvania is perhaps advisable before final judgment on the peace terms is formed.

### **BULGARIA**

The collapse of Roumania had immediate repercussions in Bulgaria, where the government for some time had been making exploratory moves towards peace. These had not succeeded because the Bulgars were endeavouring to retain the territory in Macedonia and Thrace seized from Yugoslavia and Greece.

The Bulgarian method of exit was rather cool. On August 26, 1944, the government suddenly announced that Bulgaria had withdrawn from the war and was now neutral! Any German—or Allied—soldiers entering her territory would be disarmed and interned.

By itself, this was no more than a beginning. Bulgarian envoys were directed to Cairo, to meet British and American representatives (it will be recalled that Bulgaria was not at war with

Russia). Headway was slow, for the government at Sofia was changed every two or three days: there was more than a suggestion of playing for time.

Suddenly, on September 5th, the Russians flung a bombshell. They complained, correctly, that the Bulgars were not doing as they said—they were allowing Germans to escape; they emphasised, equally correctly, that they had been very patient with Bulgaria. Now they declared war.

Nine hours later Bulgaria asked for an armistice. I have said that no Bulgarian government dare order its troops to fight against Russians. The Red Army delayed the granting of the armistice for three days, in which time it advanced rapidly into the country. The terms were reasonable. Bulgaria was to retire from Macedonia and Thrace, was to allow the Allies the use of her territory, and to take action herself, declaring war on Germany. That is to say, neutrality was not enough; like Roumania, Bulgaria had to change sides.

A new government was formed, headed by General Georgiev. Colonel Veltchev fulfilled the prophecy on page 82 by emerging as Minister for War. All progressive parties were represented in the government.

The course of events in Bulgaria ran exactly according to expectations—except for the Russian declaration of war, which was as big a surprise in Britain and the United States as it was in Bulgaria. The move did not fail to arouse suspicion. Was it necessary, since Bulgaria was already virtually out of the war? Did it mean that Russia did not wish to leave the Bulgarian armistice to Britain and America, but was determined to exert her own influence? There were not lacking people to impute sinister motives to the Russian action, and to suspect an attempt to extend Soviet influence in the Balkans.

### *YUGOSLAVIA*

All efforts to reconcile Tito and Mihailovitch having failed, on July 7, 1944, the youthful King Peter re-formed his government. Mihailovitch was dropped. Dr. Subasitch, a Croat, became

prime minister, and his government included representatives of Tito's organisation. The agreement between Tito and Subasitch proclaimed that all Yugoslavs should unite, under Tito, in the common fight against the Germans, but questions as to the internal organisation of the country were postponed until after the war.

The new government failed to stop the internecine conflict. Mihailovitch was continuously dubbed a traitor, and clashes between Chetniks and Partisans were frequent. Nevertheless, the Germans continued to offer their 100,000 gold marks for Mihailovitch, and as late as May, 1944, launched an expedition against him. If he had turned traitor, this would have been a success of which the German propaganda would have made the most. It has never hinted at it.

I suggested that Mihailovitch was holding his forces in reserve. He did not pretend to believe Tito's manifestoes. He believed that the Croat Communist planned to impose a Soviet régime on Yugoslavia, and he was determined to prevent it. But as the tide of war swept across the Balkans, Mihailovitch's difficulties increased. Most of the Chetniks were Serbs, doughty fighters, not used to standing outside the battle. There were frequent reports of Chetnik units going over to the Partisans—not because they had been converted to Communism, but because they wanted to fight against the invaders.

Then the Russians, sweeping across Roumania, made contact with the Partisans. Mihailovitch might have been able to oppose Tito, but he could scarcely hope to fight a Partisan army backed by the Russians. As I write, the Germans are gathering their garrisons in Greece, apparently to make a desperate effort to break through the Partisan screen across northern Yugoslavia; and there are reports that the Serbs have risen *en masse*. This may mean (a) that Mihailovitch could restrain his troops no longer, and that they have rushed to join the Partisans, or (b) that Mihailovitch has taken up the fight again, now that the day long awaited has arrived.

I ought to re-emphasise Mr. Churchill's comment about the

danger of taking violent sides. Unless we are careful and very prompt there may be murder or even massacre in Yugoslavia under the guise of justice on "traitors" or "quislings." Once mob passions have been aroused, they are difficult to dispel; and the blood-for-blood feud is not far removed from Balkan history.

### *GREECE*

This country has experienced the most tragic fate of all the Balkan countries, devastated by famine and civil war.

In Chapter Six I recorded that M. Papandreou organised a conference in the Lebanon, and all parties agreed to submerge their sectarian issues and to concentrate on the one essential task: the freedom of Greece. Unfortunately, the Communist fighters in Greece refused to back up the agreement of their representatives. Again there was severe fighting between Nationalist elements, to the great delight of the Germans.

The rapid change wrought in the Balkans by the collapse of Roumania and Bulgaria had its effects in Greece. As I write, the Communists are reported to have agreed to join the all-party government, and the Germans are retiring from the Greek islands. At this stage we can surely contemplate the "beneficial change" in the Greek situation which Mr. Churchill desired—although, as the Germans prepared to withdraw, the civil war broke out afresh!

### *TURKEY*

Mr. Churchill's comments (reported on page 274) were taken very seriously in Turkey, vitally concerned in the peace terms for the Balkans, and anxious to have a say in their making. German propaganda worked furiously, endeavouring to revive Turkish suspicion of Russian activities, but British and American diplomacy won the battle. On August 2, 1944, the Turks agreed to break off all diplomatic and economic relations with Germany.

This was the next best thing to a declaration of war, but there was still some uneasiness. Russian newspapers asserted that



Turkey's attitude was only a pose, and that German agents were still active. On the other hand, Russia's surprise declaration of war on Bulgaria and the march of her armies towards the Turkish frontier aroused many ancient fears. Many Turks believe that it is only a question of time before Russia reveals her views in respect of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. It is thought improbable that they will include open annexation; the Germans have long preached that Russia will demand "international control" of Istanbul and the Straits, which will be in effect Russian control. Such apprehension can be relieved only by the course of events.

British opinion has been disappointed at Turkey's rather weak attitude to German propaganda, but cannot forget that in the dark days, when Britain stood alone, Turkey resisted all German bribes to line up as a satellite power.

\* \* \*

I repeat that the course of events has not altered the basis of the Balkan problems; it has only made them more urgent.

Suspicion is one of the greatest handicaps to Balkan progress today: in particular, suspicion as to the opinions of the Great Powers. Many people suspect Russia's intentions, however benevolent their form; others suspect that Britain and the United States are scarcely interested, so that the sooner they make terms with Russia the better. The vast majority would like to decide their own destinies, with the friendship of all three powers, but are wondering if that right will be extended to them. Assuredly the time is overripe for a firm declaration; nothing is so unsettling as uncertainty.

Our first objective always was to detach the Balkan states from our enemies: this has been accomplished. The second was to clear the Germans from the Balkans: I believe that this will be accomplished before this book appears. The third is the relief of famine in countries like Greece: this will be tackled firmly. The fourth objective is to give the underprivileged Balkan peoples the chance they have never yet had—a generous opportunity

for economic stability, and for political progress dominated by the wishes of the people concerned, not of dictators from within or without. All commentators on Balkan affairs would do well to read daily the Atlantic Charter and the Moscow and Teheran Declarations; so would the statesmen who are to have the task of making the peace, and the ordinary people throughout the world who must ensure in their own interests that it is maintained.



## SHORT READING LIST

It is not only important to read about the Balkans from many angles; the books consulted should include those published yesterday as well as those published today. Thus some of those mentioned may now be out of print, but should be available from libraries.

As general background, I strongly recommend *South-Eastern Europe* (Royal Institute of International Affairs), a brief but invaluable political and economic survey, and *The Eastern Question* (Sir J. A. R. Marriott), a classic work, essential to the student and advisable to the ordinary reader. *World Without End* (Stoyan Pribichevich) is a most readable book by a man of Balkan stock, while *The Burden of the Balkans* (M. E. Durham) gives an intimate account of the region a generation ago.

For study of the difficulties involved in the political and frontier problems, it is as well to begin with Dr. R. W. Seton-Watson's clear and balanced *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*; a composite book, *The Balkans*, contains very useful chapters on the various countries by N. Forbes, A. J. Toynbee, D. Mitrany, and D. G. Hogarth. Next might follow a perusal of the appropriate sections of H. W. V. Temperley's *History of the Peace Conference of Paris*. Next continue with C. A. Macartney's two valuable books, *Hungary and Her Successors* and *Problems of the Danube Basin*. *That Blue Danube* (J. D. E. Evans) is a very useful political commentary, while a more modern short survey is to be found in *The Untamed Balkans*, by F. W. L. Kovacs.

The economic difficulties may be studied on the basis of *The Economics of Peasant Farming* (D. Warriner) and *Conditions of Economic Progress* (C. Clarke), while *Geographical Aspects of the Balkan Peninsula* (M. Newbigin) is a standard work on another aspect. Useful topographical background may be obtained—often interspersed with political or ethnographical comment—from *Peasant Europe* (H. Hessell Tiltman), *The Danube* (E. Lengyel), *Down River* (J. Lehmann), *Survey After Munich* (G. Hutton) and my own two travel books, *The Blue Danube* and *Ride to Russia*. I have already suggested works on regional federations, a subject discussed in some length in my *The New Europe*.

Of the individual countries, Bulgaria has a very sparse literature in

English. The most informative book is *Meet Bulgaria*, by R. H. Markham. Unfortunately, this was published in Bulgaria, and is difficult to obtain now. Henrietta Leslie's *Where East Is West* is a useful travel book, and J. Swire's *Bulgarian Conspiracy* exposes the machinations of modern Bulgarian politics.

Dr. R. W. Seton-Watson's *History of the Roumanians* is the standard work on this subject. Also recommended are *The Land and the Peasant in Rumania* (D. Mitrany), and *Romanian Furrow* (D. J. Hall), a sympathetic description of peasant life. Hector Bolitho's *Roumania Under King Carol* gives a friendly picture of modern political conditions.

On the subject of Yugoslavia, Louis Adamic's *The Native's Return* is a critical study of Alexander's régime by an American of Yugoslav stock; his topographical description is often more interesting than his politics. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, by Rebecca West, is likely to become a classic, in spite of its great length and high price; it is a wonderful book of its kind. Specially recommended are three books by Stephen Graham; the first, a biography, *Alexander of Yugoslavia*, gives a revealing picture of Yugoslavia and of the intrigues of neighbouring powers. *St. Vitus' Day* is a vivid account, in the form of a novel, of the events and circumstances which led to the Sarajevo murders in 1914. Another novel with a factual background, *Balkan Monastery*, is the best story of the appalling conditions in Serbia during the First World War. A final and interesting book is Olive Lodge's *Peasant Life in Jugoslavia*.

J. Swire's two books, *King Zog's Albania* and *Albania: The Rise of a Kingdom*, are critical political commentaries. *Albania's Road to Freedom* (Vandeleur Robinson) is a more modern work. My own *Albanian Back Door* will provide topographical background for both Albania and Yugoslavia.

Barbara Ward's book, *Turkey*, is an admirable short survey. *Grey Wolf*, H. C. Armstrong's biography of Kemal Ataturk, completes a picture of the rise of modern Turkey. There are, of course, endless books about ancient Greece. For topical reading I recommend Stanley Casson's *Greece and Britain*, and Compton Mackenzie's *Wind of Freedom*.

This brief list is likely to be greatly extended during the next few months, as the Balkans provide headline news.

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**BERNARD NEWMAN**—grandnephew of George Eliot and cousin of the Shakespearean actor Maurice Evans—was born in Leicestershire, England, in 1897. At seventeen he joined the British Army, and fought throughout the First World War, being mentioned for gallantry. For a while he was attached to the American Thirty-third Division.

For fifteen years (up to 1942) he spent each summer wandering about the disputed areas of Europe, mostly on a bicycle. He has visited every country in Europe and North Africa, has interviewed kings, presidents, and dictators, and stayed in the homes of the humblest peasants. He has also done military and political intelligence work in various parts of Europe.

Mr. Newman's travel books have long enjoyed a big circulation throughout the British Empire. His book "The Cavalry Goes Through" attracted great attention and led to his being described as "the spiritual Father of the Commandos." His spy stories have been published in France, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Finland. One of them even appeared in Russia as a textbook on military espionage.

In 1939 Mr. Newman was with the British Army in France; and he was with the French Army in May, 1940, when the battle broke. Since then he has been principal speaker and lecturer for the British Ministry of Information, charged with the maintenance of public morale. In 1942 he visited the United States on behalf of the British Government. His lecture audiences total over a quarter of a million people each year.

Mr. Newman has written some forty books, of which the following have been published in the United States: "Round About Andorra," "The Cavalry Goes Through," "Spy," "Secret Servant," "Mussolini Murder Plot," "Papa Pontivy and the Maginot Murder," "German Secret Service at Work," and "The New Europe."